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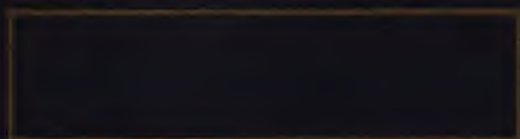
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TRADITION

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BY MARIE VAN VORST

Author of

"Fairfax and His Pride," "Big Tremaine," etc.

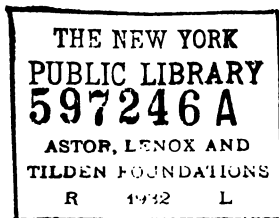
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TRADITION

TRADITION

CHAPTER I

"Jessica! Jessica!"

The girl in the window-seat did not call out in answer as she should have done:

"Hallo, Grandy!"

With a smile of amusement at the corners of her mouth, listening, knowing that there would be another call presently, she waited, curled up in the window-seat, an open book by her side.

"Jessica! Jessica!"

She loved to hear her grandfather's voice. She left her corner and came out into the low raftered room, living- and dining-room in one. Set in the strawberry bricks of the six-foot fireplace was the date of the building of the Red House: 1718. The Red House was the oldest in this part of the State and a jewel of a homestead. No ruby on her hand would have been more precious to Jessica Tryst than her homestead.

Grandy would be coming in in a moment and she perched on the edge of the big table, her feet swinging, hands on hips, and her blue eyes on the low Dutch door.

Giant logs of Grandy's own cutting burned in the chimney and Jessica loved every log of wood that burned, because it had been part of the enchanted

forests of Grandy's lumber camp. As she heard his steps outside she smiled.

"The way I adore Grandy is almost like a love story," and she said aloud as he came in: "It is a real, real love story, Grandy."

Tryst threw down his felt hat and homespun cape and saw her sitting there perched like a bright bird, waiting, a delicious slip of a girl, bright-cheeked, dark-haired, with the Tryst eyes, blue as Erin's lakes. The firelight glowed on her shoulders and on her dark head.

"Sure, Jess, you didn't hear me callin' anyways? I was thinkin' I saw the flash of your red cape along the shore."

Patrick Tryst had an axe-head in his hand, which he had taken out of the deep pocket of his brown velveteen coat. He stood by the chimney in the firelight, handling the steel caressingly, as though it were a human thing.

"But I did hear you, Grandy. Wasn't it dreadful of me to let you call and call?"

"But why for all the world did you, Jess?"

He came over to her and she put both her hands through his arm, linking them, and the light from under the red lampshade fell on the axe-head and it glowed like a bloody thing in the woodcutter's hands.

"*Grandy!*"

She quickly covered the steel with both her warm, young hands.

"Grandfather!"

"Why, what's wrong, Jessica?"

She shook her head, as pale as death, but would not for anything have had him guess her sentimental horror of steel and blood. Clipping down from the table now,

she clung closely to him and they stepped out of the firelight and their two figures in the shadow were one shadow.

She shook it off. "Grandy, I was saying to myself as you came in, you and I are like a love-story."

"There'll be ones comin' along, Jess." He laughed and dropped the axe-head in his pocket. "I saw Henshaw today — I think he has his eye on you for his boy."

"You spoil me for everybody else, darling." She caressed his arm, leaned her wan cheek against it.

But Tryst had slipped the axe-head in the pocket next her; the steel chilled her through the velveteen. She shivered, dropped his arm, went over and took her favorite place in the rocker by the fire. Tryst at seventy was over six feet, a fine figure of a man, with lionesque head, a mane of iron-grey hair, smooth face, browned by years of exposure to the winds.

"I talk as though I knew a lot of other men, Grandy, and I don't know any one but the Henshaw boys and a few of the Fortune Bay fellows."

She was disdainful.

"Others will be comin' along, Jess. The world's full of lovers."

He threw himself in his favorite armchair, stretched out his big body, relaxed with a sigh of satisfaction, revelling in home comforts, in warmth after the cold, the joy of being housed and loved. Without, the snow crept up to the threshold and lay against the casing of the window bright as glass. Tryst and Jess were now back in the light of the fire that his own logs had made.

"Sure to come along, dearie," he murmured, "sure to come along."

There was no luxury in the best room of the Red House, but the walls were lined with books and the furniture was of the same period as the date in the red bricks. The floor was covered with rag carpet woven in stripes. Into the living-room Jessica's bedroom opened and her grandfather's and the kitchen and the room of the Irish servant.

"I'm glad it is winter, Grandy," she spoke across the glow.

"So that you can coast, Jess?"

"I love coasting! That's not the reason, though!"

"It will be skating then?"

"No. So *you'll* have to stay indoors and we can talk and talk in the evenings."

"So you can dream by the fire, Jess?"

"*You* dream too, Grandy."

"Oh, I've dreamed dreams!" said the woodsman.

"Now the dreams are all for your future, my girl."

She nodded her head gently. "I know. Everything for me, you dear."

Tryst's face grew sombre. He leaned towards his granddaughter.

"What is it you're seeing in the fire?"

She hesitated, blushing.

"A little kiddie . . . I love kiddies, Grandy. . . ."

Tryst's face brightened. He gave a sigh of relief as though a tension had relaxed in him.

"Fine! It's the way you should be seeing, my girl — after dolls, real babies. Jess, he'll have his father's eyes! — Boy, of course?"

"Boy, of course!" said the girl proudly. "With your eyes, very blue."

"You'll be the mother of fine sons, Jess, and make some man happy as a king."

Jessica changed her position, her cheeks growing too hot in the glow.

"Come away here, Jess."

She went and laid her hand lightly on his splendid mane of hair, her hand round his neck and so close to him in her scarlet woollen dress on the arm of his chair that she suggested a cardinal bird flown in for warmth out of the cold.

"You'll be leaving me one day, Jess — it's the way men make women do. Fifty years ago your grandmother and me came from Ireland and settled here. It was a poor life for a woman in a log cabin twenty miles from any doctor. Your father was born in a snow-storm; your grandmother and I were alone. I had my eye on this Red House for her; she used to come and look at it, glowing away here ripe and red, snug and fit! I thought I would die with pride the day I brought her home and gave it to her! She did not know I had bought it at all till I took her home."

His brogue was rich as his voice; he had never let it wear away in the western land, and voice and brogue had the smoothness of velvet.

"1718"

"Built long ago by other pioneers who had their struggles and their happiness in this old room as well as us."

Tryst stirred and his granddaughter unclasped her hands and moved a little.

"I gave the Red House to your grandmother by law.

When she died, she left it to you, Jess. It's yours — no power on earth can take it from you."

"No power on earth!" She repeated softly. "But who in the world would be wanting to!"

"Stick to it through thick and thin. Jess, a home is the best thing for a woman to have."

She nodded and looked adoringly around the room, in fire and red lamplight filled with crimson glow.

"But you'll be leaving it one day," said Tryst practically. "And I'm wanting to tell you, Jess, things are going well for me. You'll be rich and fine."

"I shall *never* want to leave the Red House, Grandy."

"And you'll come back to it some day, too. There's that about it draws like a magnet! It drew me and my wife to build a love-home here. . . . Warm and snug and mellow, and it seemed to sing to me as I worked and said, 'Make a home for the wife,' and it's been a holy place, made sacred by love."

Tryst said more naturally:

"Now, Allanah, this husband fella who's comin' to take you away, he won't be crazy about the old Red House at all as we are! He'll be takin' you away."

"There isn't any one — never will be."

"I want you to marry a *man*."

"But of course, you old dear!"

"Not of course," he said shortly. "There's power of types in the world, but a real man you don't be knockin' down every day. Now, he mustn't be afraid of work" — Jess Tryst looked at his strong hands — "And the heart of him must be clean and strong."

She took his hand and laid it against her cheek and leaned her head on it, kissing it softly.

"And Life will not frighten him either. I'd sooner he was afraid of Death than of Life."

"How do you mean, Grandy?"

"I mean," said the woodsman, "he'll have the grit in him that makes a fella pick up and pull up and forge ahead, no matter how many times he is beaten down."

Her young ideals were unformed; she was content and happy. Whatever could change the stream of her peaceful life?

From the distance came the jingling of sleigh bells and Tryst started.

"Henshaw's coming along, and, Jess, we've to talk business — you must get along to bed now, darlin'."

An instant change came over Tryst; his voice hardened. He rose and Jess got up, sighing,

"Grandy, I *hate* old Henshaw."

But as she kissed him good-night and went obediently to the door to her bedroom, Tryst said:

"Whatever shall I tell Henshaw? Will you go over to Fortune Bay to spend some days with them? It is a bit of life for you and I think you'd better go, Jessica."

"Tell him so, then. Good-night, Grandy dear."

After she had left, Tryst stood for a few moments with his back to the fire, his eyes fixed on the door, waiting for his guest. Between him and the doorway, the beloved objects of the old room, his sacred possessions, beautiful with the touch of the hands that he loved, a crimson glow over it all, spoke to him with words almost audible, as they leapt up behind him, the flames of the cedar fire called and spoke of the beloved past; and every log of wood he burned held memories of his love,

of his struggle, his fights for fortune. And as Simon Henshaw, muffled up to the ears, tall, angular, thin, New England to the backbone, hard cold business to the backbone, came in, he brought the chill of reality into the dream-room.

A few moments later he sat opposite to Patrick Tryst at the table under the lamp, papers between them. Henshaw was a striking contrast to the handsome Irishman, whom a long American life had seemed to intensify. Henshaw was commonplace. His emotions ticketed and labelled, he understood nothing but facts; his dreams were only nightmares after indigestible pie.

"You won't smoke, Henshaw? No, I know you don't smoke, sir."

But Tryst found his pipe on the chimney piece, where Jessica put it away for him. He filled it.

"When I was a boy I cut out pleasures, Tryst. There are few I allow myself even now."

Henshaw was puritanical satisfaction! One of his ancestors had been put in the stocks for kissing his wife on Sunday.

The lumberman, in great apparent good-humor, fixed his eyes on Henshaw, sparkling with blue fires. He held the lawyer magnetically. Patrick Tryst was at his best tonight, ruddy with enthusiasm. He started to open the door into the little kitchen.

"Now, let Mrs. Shaughn make you a hot egg-nog, Henshaw!"

"Not for me. I have got to get back shortly, as my wife will worry if I am out long in the cold."

"Now," said Tryst as he came back to him, "that's where we are different, Simon — *multiply* your pleas-

ures, my man, *I* say. Get all you can out of life and thank God for senses and tastes."

Tryst walked to and fro in his glowing room. Virile in his old age, he appeared to have tasted life.

"Henshaw, I am going to be a very rich man."

"Money's a great thing."

"I only want riches for the girl," Tryst said. He glanced towards the door behind which Jessica had disappeared. "I want to push on for the girl."

Henshaw nodded understandingly. His eldest son Billy was crazy about Jessica Tryst; it would make a good match. His wife loved Jessica Tryst.

"All my own self and personal ambition, Simon, I laid away in Fortune Bay's graveyard. I buried myself the day I went to the churchyard with my wife. I have taken life by the throat with my naked hands, Henshaw; came to America with only the clothes on my back and the fire of desire in my heart. But I faced the white winter here with the little woman on my arms and the cry of my son's child in my ears, and I fought for them both." He paused and put his hands to his eyes for a moment. "And I have been ruined twice and no one ever knew. That's why I've made a third fortune, so that the girl shall be at ease when I'm gone on."

In the deep fireplace the logs of his cutting broke and fell in ashes white as bone dust, light as feather, perishable as the snow that lay fresh on the threshold, already covering up the imprints of Henshaw's feet. Henshaw glanced around the cordial, rustic room.

"Why, the old house won't hold ye any more, Patrick! You'll be moving to the city, I guess, shortly, if you're as rich as all that!"

"No other house will ever hold me," said Patrick Tryst quietly. "I am going to make a trust for Jessica; I'm closing up one or two big deals in Boston now."

"Um!" said Henshaw, looking at him keenly. "Hope you ain't speculating, Patrick?"

"Speculating is a nasty word!"

"Means just what it says, though," said Henshaw practically.

"I have had to call on big sums of money lately, as the business has been branching out. You can't handle big business timidly, Simon."

He came a bit closer to his old friend. "I have asked you to come over to night, Henshaw," he said confidently, "because I want fifteen thousand dollars for twelve months; I'd rather ask you for it than any one else; I'll give you six per cent for it."

"Well," said Henshaw slowly, "I never lent as much in my life to anybody."

Tryst stood over him, looking down with the air of the benevolent and successful neighbor.

"Never mind," he said. "You know what my security is; the northwest corner of the Camp."

"It is good enough, quite good enough, Tryst, but there is a first mortgage on it; I drew it for you."

"Quite true," said Tryst easily, "but you know as well as I do what that land is worth."

He waited, looking down on his neighbor, not in the least over eager. "I have other securities," he said.

"Have you another in the investment line? I think I should prefer it," said Henshaw.

"How about United States Steel?"

"All right!" said Henshaw.

"First Preferred."

"I'll put the money to your account," said Henshaw, rising, "tomorrow at the bank."

"I'll meet you there," said Tryst, "and hand you over the securities."

When a little later, the old oak door shut out the winter wind, the snow and Henshaw, the woodcutter stood a long time with his back to the glowing ashes, looking into the room as it grew darker and darker. He was mentally footing up his gains in the Stock Market; he had been bitten by the speculating bug; he had invested everything he had. As he slipped his hand down in the pockets of his velveteen coat, he touched the cold steel of the axe-head which he had dropped in there that evening. He was going to try it on his trees, but everything now that he had to do with his forests seemed a reproach to him — his wonderful trees, the very brawn and sinews of his workmen, their willing arms, the sound of labor, the swinging axes, the crashing trees, seemed to reproach him for turning his back upon day labor and going to the money markets for that which was less than bread.

CHAPTER II

As they lay side by side on the little hill under a splendid chestnut, dressed in September gold, they could hear the dancers' feet on the rustic platform and the music of the country orchestra playing for the Fortune Bay annual picnic.

She was tired out with dancing and there was triumph in it for him; he had danced every dance with her!

Cheek on hand, a chestnut leaf between his lips, he lay at her side on the ground watching her.

He had been with her since morning, when he had called for her at the old red homestead in the buckboard to take her to the picnic, and now the sunset was reddening the virgin forests, of which he had dreamed in his country across the sea. The light, too, was reddening on the waters of the Bay until it looked like "a sheet of raspberry syrup." He could not think of other comparison! With every hour he had been liking her more — *loving* her more! Yes, what was the use of being shy with the word? He had never said it out before. From that morning, when he had seen her in the low doorway of the house, her scarlet cloak over her shoulder and a straw hat on her lovely dark head, calling out to him: "Oh, hallo! I am ready!" he had known that he was *in love*.

Now she lay beside him, quiet and unconscious of his

mood. Open air, a jolly good time, even boiled eggs, sandwiches, lemonade and cakes eaten with her, smacked of nectar and ambrosia, and the charm of her and the need of her grew and grew.

He had come over to the States on a holiday before going back to Oxford. He had got his caribou; was taking two glorious heads back to hang in his rooms in Christ Church and perhaps some day even on O'More Castle's walls. He was visiting in Fortune Bay with some fellows who had been over to England with the Harvard crew.

The last week-end Jessica had passed with Henshaw's sisters, and she had promised to go with him on the annual picnic. He knew pretty girls in his own country; not one so vivid, so amusing as Jess — so like a dream-girl come true!

Here they were now alone on the little hill-top, the black forest behind them stretching away across the State, and the Bay turning from pink to dark. Everything conspired to make the moment rich, something he would never forget. How gaily the dancing feet tapped the boards of the dancing-stand! He was crazy about these darky tunes—"I want you, my Honey, yes I do!"

Bliss to lie and watch her when she did not know it! She was tired. He had made her dance on and on for the joy of feeling her near him, her hand on his arm, her breath upon his cheek.

("Jessical Jessical")

She started up, leaning on the ground, listening.

"Who called me?"

"Nobody — I did not hear anything. What did you think you heard?"

("Jessica! Jessica!")

He was wretched, because the spell would break so soon.

"It is nothing but the music of the dancing. Please, *please*, rest a bit more, won't you? It is so *jolly* to watch you rest!"

She resumed her outstretched position, relaxed. This time her hands thrown above her head. Under the evening sky she seemed to call to the night wind to caress her and to the leaves to touch her as, slowly circling down like golden guineas, they fell on her. Leaning over, he took one from her hair and laid it between his lips.

Between them now there was only a few feet of grassy ground covered by the leaves — her dear straw hat, and then herself — quiet, a long slender bit of her from curly hair to small feet in their thin stockings and neat shoes.

"Tired?"

His voice even in this one word came shakily. She shook her head.

"Not a little bit! I could begin all over again."

"But it is *far* jollier to be alone like this, don't you think?"

She did not answer. What was she thinking of? How deeply black her hair was! How it crinkled round her face, and how red and soft her mouth was! — That was a daring thing for him to say out to himself! — He wanted to kiss her.

"Jessica! Jessica!"

She jumped up.

"Some one *did* call — there is no doubt about it! It was my grandfather's voice. I *must* go home at once — we must go back at once."

He caught her hand. "Oh, no, no! *Do come back to the stand and have one more dance with me!*"

He tried to lead her, but her face was turned towards the road where down-hill, in a safe place, far from the other vehicles, their horse and buckboard were hitched fast.

"Come back with me, do — for one dance more."

("I want you, my Honey! Yes, I do.")

The soft, half-savage music, its crying sweetness, its expression of desire as sweet as honey, said what he wanted better than he could. He drew near her slowly and she turned and fully met his blue eyes.

He was young, but not primitive. He was born a real lover, the type sensitive women love. He drank in her beauty, absorbed her from chin to hair, and stammered:

"How perfect you are — how wonderful!" — (And just one word more) — "*Mine!*"

He kissed her. The first woman beside his mother, he had ever kissed on the lips.

"How *perfect* you are, dear Jess!"

She pushed him away, gently, gently.

"Don't! Don't!"

He laughed. "Oh, yes, but I will!"

"I have never let any one kiss me before — never!"

"It had to begin sometime, and I am glad it began today."

"Never *anybody*."

"I am not 'anybody' — I am *the one* — don't you know it?"

"I must go home."

He slipped his arm around her waist. "I'll take you if I must, and I want to see your grandfather."

They started toward the hill-path winding around toward the main road.

"You ought not to have done that."

"Why, I've been longing to — all day long."

They stopped in the middle of the little down-hill path down which they had been running like two school-children, and he held her back and with both hands on her shoulders, made her face him.

"Honestly — tell me, are you sorry?"

Two pairs of Irish eyes looked into each other; hers were darker, more violet, more sombre.

"Are you sorry?"

"No."

"Oh! God bless you! I wanted to all day long!"

He could hardly hear her.

"So did I."

"Oh, God bless you — Jess!"

"Jack and Jill." The old song was made for lovers such as these, for pauses halfway down-hill to love-make. They kissed again and went down the rest of the hill slowly, their arms wound round each other. They unhitched the horse together; they got into the buck-board together, sitting close, and they drove home along the thick, sandy road slowly, slowly by the Bay shore road, the Bay on one side, the black forest on the other, and the sand rustled through the thin wheels of the little wagon and the horse's feet made no sound at all on the thick, soft road.

He had been born in a historic castle of his father's people in Ireland. His mother was an Englishwoman and his father an Irish gentleman, and he was removed from the succession by one life. He had been brought

up by a proud woman, with an exalted idea of traditions and, as far as she could inculcate him with her pride in race and breeding — the pride of caste — she had done so; but there was much of his happy-go-lucky military father's temperament in the boy.

"I don't know half enough about you, Jess," he said, as they turned in the curve of the road and saw in the distance the smoke curling from the chimney of the old Red House.

"There is not much to know."

"I know all that the Henshaws could tell me — you may be sure of that! You were born in this wonderful red house and your grandfather is a grand old person, a lumber king, and I always wanted to see one of those lumber camps."

"Grandfather will take you; he'll like to take you."

As they came up to the house he saw a fine-looking old woman standing on the threshold, watching out for some one to return.

"There," said Jessica, "that's Bridget Shaughn, my mother and my nurse — she's every one — all excepting Grandy."

She was Irish unmistakably, low-built, stocky, with fine muscles and little, old, beautifully modelled hands, resting on the ledge of the door over which only half of her figure was visible, a rare, old face, kindly, humorous and tender, framed by sparse grey hair.

Jessica displayed her companion with great pride and a fine rise of red in her cheek.

"A great friend, Bridget, a very great friend — Irish!"

The woman stepped back, opening the other part of

the Dutch door. From his yellow crop of curling hair to his tennis shoes she took him in with keen, piercing, understanding in her grey-blue eyes, ferret-like in their sharpness. He put out a hand to her cordially.

"*Irish*, is it, with a nose and a chin on you the way you have?"

Jessica laughed. "But his *eyes*, Bridget!"

The old woman looked into them and then quickly at Jessica.

"And *what* will they be calling ye in the old country?"

"O'More — Brian O'More."

Her face, which was not confident, brightened at the name and the way he said it.

"I know them well! The O'Mores of Castle O'More by the hill country, looking out on the sea as it is! A wurrl'd of property and a *wurrl'd* of poverty."

Brian laughed heartily. "That's *us*! You've got us fine!"

"What will you be doing along with all that, Mr. Brian O'More?"

"Oh, I!" he exclaimed lightly. "Just nothing at all! — I am the son of a poor soldier."

The two young people had come together into the low, darkly raftered room and the old woman looked first at one and then at the other. But they were absorbed and forgot her. The brightness on her face when Brian had first spoken, died, leaving her expression thoughtful and troubled. She crossed the room quietly to the door of her kitchen.

"Shan't Bridget get you some tea?"

"No, no!" he said. "Nothing, thanks awfully."

He wanted Jessica alone, and that the dear old thing

should leave them as soon as possible. But at the door of her kitchen Bridget nodded to him.

"The flag will be flying, young gentleman, on O'More Castle when you go home — *flying for yourself*."

"Oh," he cried, "*don't* say that — please — please!" But she was gone.

He paled. He was half Celt and very superstitious. He thrust his hands deep in his pockets and looked around the room, the home of his Lady-Love. It would have been only a corner in O'More Castle.

"What a lovely room!" he said curiously. "How quaint and jolly!"

Jessica was looking at him curiously. "*Is* what Bridget says true? Are you *really* grand like that?"

She would not let him kiss her. He pursued her and she climbed up into the window-seat, in her favorite corner, and he sat beside her, leaning down over her.

"There is nothing grand about me, Jess! My father was a poor soldier, a captain with a captain's pay. I have always been frightfully hard up. But it *is* true that there is a Castle O'More; it belongs to my uncle."

She said nothing further. It meant little to her. She was glad he was poor, the son of a poor captain. Brian took her hands and brought them close to his breast.

"I want to see your grandfather. I want to wait until he comes home."

And as he said this, as though the voice came in to answer, Jessica again heard the musical call of her grandfather's voice outside.

("Jessica! Jessica!")

And she sprang down from the window-seat and rushed toward the door.

"It *is* Grandy, Brian! It is Grandy coming home!"

He picked up his cap and thrust it into his pocket and hurried bareheaded after her out of the house, towards the gate, where she stood leaning over the bars looking down the road.

"I am so glad! Now you'll see Grandy!"

And her eyes as she looked up at him, asked innocently: "What will you tell him?"

He would have told Tryst everything then; Brian O'More would have made his heart's nest here then, but suddenly Jessica said, her hand on his arm:

"Brian, you must not wait now. I must tell him gently. I am all he has; we are all alone together here. Please go now! I must tell Grandy first myself alone tonight."

But nothing followed the call, and as they stood listening, Brian O'More too, as well as Jessica, came to an adjustment with himself. He was not twenty-one, he had not a cent in the world; his mother had made frightful sacrifices for him. She expected everything of him. They were only children, back of them two others who loved them better than anything in the world. The light had left the Bay and the sky; the moonlight was young and pale. Bareheaded still and leaning over her, he kissed her again and again.

"I'll go," he said. "But I'll come back, Jess. Little Jess, you are all I want in the world."

And in another moment he had gone, running through the gate, running down the road, and his slender figure, in white summer flannels, was swallowed up in the young moonlight. Down the road, round the curve and out of sight, she watched him go. Jessica had seen old

age appear around the bend of the road when her grandfather, straight as a pine, his white hair blowing around his face, had used to come home; now she saw youth disappear forever around the curve. She heard the call again:

("Jessica! Jessica!")

She listened, terrified, cold to her marrow now. *Why should she hear that call when there was no living soul?* What did it mean? Some horrible thing had happened to Grandy.

Around the bend of the road came the figure of a man, hurrying as men hurry who have news to bring, and she saw that he was her grandfather's foreman.

"Miss Tryst!" he cried breathlessly. "Oh, Miss Jessica!"

And she put out her hands against him, as though to ward off the horror, and seeing that she was going to fall he caught her by both her arms.

"Come indoors, Miss Jessica — come on, let me take you indoors."

"Tell me right here."

The woodcutter looked down on her in pity, his own face white with emotion.

"How ever can I tell you? The Boss was standing behind one of the men, watching him fell the tree and an axe's head flew off and. . . ."

She listened with parted lips. It was here — the reality at last! Her constant fear, those steel-cold axe-heads! The man went on:

"It struck him in the neck. He fell, Miss Jessica, like his trees — right down."

She murmured: "I can't bear it! Oh, I can't bear it!" And fell, too, without a word.

The woodcutter lifted her up with the tenderness of a woman and carried her to Mrs. Shaughn.

CHAPTER III

He had signed his check that afternoon for a quarter of a million dollars. He was the richest man in Ohio, with a genius for making and handling money, but this night he looked like a beaten-down old man.

"I don't think there is a thing in the world worth making you look like that, Josh Herrick!"

At the sound of his wife's voice he stirred. Mrs. Herrick sat with folded hands opposite him in the corner of the plush sofa. She had never done "a stroke of anything," so she put it, since her husband struck oil — oh, not because she was proud, but because she wanted "to rest up." Her capable hands, that had grown white and plump with twenty years of idleness, clasped comfortably in her lap, Mrs. Joshua Herrick seemed serenely at peace with life; but tonight she was troubled down to the very quick.

"Not when it's your boy?"

"No, nothing ought to make a man look like you do, Dad!"

Joshua Herrick was one of the early oil kings. The jewels on his wife's fat fingers, the gaudy, tasteless, frightfully expensive rooms, the stone house on the principal avenue of the town where they lived, were all created by oil. But on this evening money played no part in their thoughts as they sat alone together in the "libr'y," as Mrs. Herrick called it, meeting one of those

crises which come to parents when their human hearts are wrung out like cloth.

The father made a violent gesture with both hands, as though he threw something useless away.

"You can have him, Jen!"

The mother answered quietly. "I had him twenty years ago." And the sparkles of her diamond rings as she turned them round and round on her fat fingers seemed like the tears she had shed for him crystallised.

"I don't know *whose* fault it is" — Herrick's voice was hard — "I don't say *yours*, I don't say *mine*, but Fred's turned out a darned poor piece of stuff!"

"But he is only twenty," the mother murmured.

Her husband gave a snort of contempt.

"When I was twenty I was supporting my father and mother. . . ."

"Don't go back to *you*," the wife said quietly.

"Money has spoiled most of the *men* — nowadays."

They sat a few moments, quiet, staring at their modern problem, two uneducated true-hearted people troubled for their modern, spoiled, rich young son.

"It would have been better," Mrs. Herrick said, "if Fred had gone right to work, 'stead of going to college."

"Couldn't refuse my boy an education."

"I guess it would have been a good job if we *had* refused him, here and there, Josh!"

Herrick Senior appeared to have collapsed before the situation and his wife could not bear the spectacle. Their great love for each other had been an inspiration to them both all their lives. Mrs. Herrick, a ponderous millionaire, hated to move about after dinner — she weighed well over two hundred pounds — but she sighed

and rose and came over to her husband, putting her hand tenderly on his shoulder

"Don't take it so hard, dearie."

There had never been a crisis in Herrick's career which her voice could not soothe.

"*You* take it hard enough, Jen, too — there's the worst. If I thought that wretched boy could break *your* heart, I'd. . . ."

He looked up at her. She was to him the handsomest of women; he saw nothing vulgar in her ponderous flesh, in the hands which, although they no longer bore the marks of household labor, were coarse and fat. He thought her showy dresses were "elegant" and he was proud to cover her with jewels and see her fill his velvet chairs.

Mrs. Herrick said with sublime simplicity: "Fred couldn't break my heart long as I've got you!"

The oil king put his hand over hers on his shoulder. Strength had come to him for thirty years through her love. He was himself again; his brow cleared; he sat straight. And one now saw the power in his stocky figure and the magnetism in the eyes under heavy brows.

"Go on upstairs, Jen," he said authoritatively, "I want to see Fred alone."

But she waited.

"Go on up."

"I shan't stir a step until you promise. . . ."

"Promise what?"

". . . Not to be too hard on him."

"There you are! Woman all over! *That's* what's the matter with him — you've spoiled him on one side and I've spoiled him on the other."

"Well," returned Mrs. Herrick logically, "if that's so, then it ain't Fred's fault."

"You go on upstairs," he repeated. "Fred's too big to thrash and after all, Jen, he's yours and you don't have to plead with me for something that belongs to you. Now go on up."

Herrick stood by the mahogany chimney-piece, where the bronze clock and the bronze vases seemed heavier than the mantelpiece itself. He held an unlit cigar which, in the next few minutes as he talked to his son, he waved to and fro as though it were a baton with which he was leading an imaginary orchestra.

The pale boy who came in, with an attempted air of ease, could not meet his father's eyes. He did not like to sit down while his father stood; he did not know what to do with himself; and still he wanted to seem unafraid, equal to the moment. His father settled the hesitation for him.

"You go over there, Fred, under the lamp, so I can look at you. Don't sit in the corner of the sofa — that's your mother's place and you're not fit to take it."

The young man did as he was bid. He went over and sat on the arm of the big chair that his father had left under the reading-lamp, his hands in his pockets. He was very big for twenty years of age, well-made and well-developed, powerfully set up, athletic and muscular, and if his face had not shown marks of heavy drinking and already the wear of life, he would have been a handsome chap. There was his mother's gentleness in his face, almost a weakness in the mouth. He had his father's brow and his father's clear grey eyes. They could not meet the older man's now.

"You're a pretty piece of goods," said the oil king. "I don't ask you to sit there because I want to look at you, Fred, but I promised your mother I'd have one talk with you before I turned you out of the house."

Fred Herrick drew his breath in and bit his lip. He had left his mother upstairs and she had made him promise, as she had made the man downstairs promise, that he would be his best.

"I know pretty well," said Herrick Senior, "what goes on in the colleges. Nobody sent me to college; the only chances I've ever had I've grabbed. I know all about the fast living that there is. I'm no greenhorn up here in the country, my boy, who doesn't know the smell of oil from the smell of whiskey, and I'm not a sentimentalist; nothing but a plain business man. And I am only going to say two things to you, Fred — I'd rather see you selling eggs over a counter in a grocery store, what I was doing at your age, than see you as you are tonight. That's one thing. And the other is that you're not going back to Harvard."

"What?" said the boy, and he sat up.

The baton that Mr. Herrick was waving in the air came to a standstill. Herrick looked at it, saw that it was a cigar, lit it and put it in his mouth.

"That's all," said his father shortly. "If you want to drink yourself to death, you can do it right here under your mother's eyes."

"Do you mean, sir," said the young man, "that I can't finish my college course?"

Herrick laughed sharply.

"Your college course! It's been a pretty kind of course, hasn't it, Fred? Drunk most of the time as far

as I can make out! Gosh! I don't know how the other fathers stand it."

"But," stammered the boy, "Mother — does she know?"

The father looked at him without speaking. The boy dropped his eyes. Only twenty years as he was, he had seen one thing of perfect beauty in his life — the love of these two. The woman bending to the man's will; the woman doing everything for the man; trusting the man. He knew that if his father made this decision, his mother would not say a word; that it would be wisdom to her and the best thing. He stared for a moment at the carpet between his father's heavy feet, feet that had gone barefoot, feet that had trodden the hard ways of the working poor, but that looked stolid and comfortable in their low conventional pumps and their silk socks.

Fred got up. Young as he was, he realized the tragedy that had come to him as a modern young man. Harvard days' companions, the making of new friends, the keeping of old, the links, the ties, the interests, the sports, the fun, the distinction it meant — all taken away by this severe decision.

"Dad!" he half sobbed, and the word hardly passed his lips.

Herrick Senior looked him up and down.

"I'm not taking a sudden decision, Fred," he said. "I've thought it all out. I've got a lot of money to leave to somebody some day, a lot of money. It would be a crime to leave it to a man such as you seem to be tonight. I'm going to send you into the steel works and see if real work will make anything out of you. Come, go upstairs." And he sent him out in a different tone

than the one he had used to his wife. "And buck up and don't let your mother see how you feel."

After the boy had left the room, Joshua Herrick smoked his cigar out without changing his position, well-planted on his strong feet. He had a lot of money to give his son — that he had to give him.

What else?

Ancestry and traditions meant nothing at all to Joshua Herrick, who sprang from the soil wellnigh. At Fred's age he had been a clerk in a grocery store forty miles from any railroad, green as grass, and Fred's mother had been a cook in the only country hotel within many miles. Work was back of Fred Herrick — hard work — and millions were before him. Work and money — these were his traditions.

CHAPTER IV

In the Red House twilight deepened around Jessica's figure in her mourning frock. She curled herself up in the window-seat — her familiar place, where her grandfather always looked first to find her when he came home. She could not believe that it was true and that he had gone forever. She kept repeating to herself: "It is only a bad dream. I shall wake up and find I have been asleep and hear him calling me."

The room was full of memories to her of her grandfather. She could see him before the fire, filling his pipe, dressed either in corduroy or heavy tweeds; or then she would see him sitting at the writing-table, talking business with Mr. Henshaw; or deep in his chair, his splendid white hair round his fine old face.

Jessica's eyes burned and she pressed her hands over them, but the picture of Grandy, his fine face and snowy hair, was vivid; she could not let it go.

Grandy was so proud of her! Who would mind now when she should go to college — for, of course, she would go — she would do everything just as he had planned — just as they had planned together. *But who would care?*

She would make herself the woman Grandy dreamed of; she had studied under Tryst himself, and how precious that care seemed to her now that the protecting arm was gone! There was only Bridget Shaughn to mind or

know. Grandy had made her feel that she would be rich, but she knew little of money. Their wants had been few, their life simplicity itself.

Living as they did, twenty miles by the road from any township, she had few friends. This year, when her grandfather had gone up into camp, he had insisted that she should pass a week or two with the Henshaws at Bangor. And during that visit she had met Brian.

The color came to her cheeks, the tears rushed to her eyes. There was now another feeling in her heart besides her sorrow.

Was this what love meant? Was this what the songs she had heard sung and the verses she had read told about? Yes! She had hardly breathed it to herself. She had felt that it was not the moment to think of anything but Grandy; but youth is insistent, will be served, and all of a sudden the lovely memory came with its sweetness and its mastery, and she felt again the ecstasy under the moon. This was love!

She was in love — Brian O'More loved her. To her a kiss on the lips was sacred; it meant that she was engaged to him, it meant that he would come back and marry her, and for the very first time she wondered that he had not written her a letter. She could have had one by that morning's post from Bangor! What would he say when he learned that she was alone in the world? He would come back to her at once? Yes, this is what it meant. This was love! If she had known that Brian O'More was sailing away from the United States with an ache in his heart very much like her own! She could never, never show Brian O'More to her grandfather. How cruel! The ideas of honor and the high principles in

which she had been bred did not let her feel a moment's doubt of O'More. Here Bridget came in.

"Miss Jessica darling, it's Mr. Henshaw from Bangor. Will you see the man, dearie?"

"Yes, of course."

When Henshaw came in, he found her standing in the window immobile, tearless, her little handkerchief pressed in her hand.

"I drove right over as soon as I heard the news."

Henshaw's voice was funereal. He had put on his blackest clothes. He was thoroughly antipathetic to Jessica under the most cheerful circumstances, and she wanted now to see him least of all people. He started to take a chair before the table, near the familiar things.

"Oh, please — that was Grandy's chair."

Henshaw immediately took another seat. He understood that she was an emotional little thing and admired her because she did not cry. But this time he was unfortunate and chose another favorite place of Tryst's and stood impressively before the mantelpiece. But Jessica said nothing more; she saw that from now on life would brush away all her memories. The New England lawyer was a very different figure in the room from her grandfather. It was as though a pigmy came and stood in the giant's place.

Henshaw was married, had three children, but he knew nothing of women, and Jessica, in her black dress, pale and charming, but vaguely touched his sympathy. When he had supposed Patrick Tryst to be the richest lumber man within fifty miles he had hoped his son would marry the girl; now he intended firmly to keep the young people apart.

"I came right out to the Bay as soon as I heard. I was your grandfather's lawyer. I drew his will up and I came to put things before you just as they stand, Jessica."

The worst thing in the world had happened to her already. She could not be afraid of life any more. Her love for Brian was too new and not sufficiently part of herself to soothe or to comfort her

"You better sit down, Jessica."

"Thank you, Mr. Henshaw. I can hear things quite as well standing."

He had a long blue envelope between his thin fingers which he tapped, and he said, touching it solemnly: "Your grandfather's will."

Her eyes travelled to the document.

"Better sit down, Jessica," he repeated, trying to be kind, and a thrill ran through her.

And to silence him she did so now, dropping in the great armchair — hers — opposite Grandy's own empty chair.

"Your grandfather this time last year was the richest man within fifty miles." Henshaw's voice was full of melancholic regret. He had been intimate with Tryst and had been flattered to handle his affairs. He looked at Jessica meditatively, thinking of the rise and the sudden fall of her fortunes. "Then he was bitten by the speculative bug and things went badly from then on." Henshaw opened the envelope. "He made this will last year, Jessica, before Christmas. It meant something then. He left you, in it, everything. If Tryst had died then you would have been a rich girl — quite a little heiress." (She would have been very likely his daughter-in-law — it was too bad!)

He heard her say in her low charming voice.

"I don't care *anything* about money, Mr. Henshaw."

Henshaw's lips were so thin and so expressionless that the smile had no effect upon the hard ugliness of his features.

"Money is an important thing, Jessica — nobody can get on without it. Now," he went on, taking the will out of the envelope, "there's no use my reading it to you because the paper it is written upon is the only thing that's left you." Henshaw looked at her white face, with her parted lips growing dry. "Tryst put all his available cash in sugar in Boston — he speculated in sugar, Jessica, you understand, all last year."

"I am afraid not very well."

"Then he mortgaged all his lumber land; then he sold out a lot of land and bought more heavily."

Again Henshaw heard her saying: "It was all for me — poor Grandy!"

"He was too ambitious. A merchant is a fool to speculate. I told Tryst many times; he never listened to me."

Here Jessica left her place for the window-seat and sat drooping there in the evening light, rich and yellow as the lost gold which she would never see. Generous, extravagant as all Nature's beauty is, not to be bought or paid for, it covered Jessica as she sat there in her black dress, her head bent, listening to the story of her house's ruin.

"Your grandfather borrowed fifteen thousand dollars of me and when I said the will was the only thing he left, I forgot his debt and his note."

Henshaw had it with him. It came out of his pocket and lay down on the top of the blue envelope.

"Grandy owed *you* money?"

"We'll talk of it later."

"No, no, I want to hear it now."

"Well," said Henshaw, "you have heard it. That is how it stands — debts, Jessica. And I am sorry I have not any better news to bring you."

Her eyes had looked past him around the beloved room. She could hardly frame the words:

"The Red House?"

"Yours, your grandmother left it to you — nothing can take it from you!"

The relief was so great that she could hardly breathe. Now the place seemed to have human arms that embraced her and Henshaw's voice was beautiful to her as he said: "Belongs exclusively to you — nothing can take it from you."

"So Grandy said," she repeated with tears in her voice. "I thought it was like that."

She could lean against these walls; they would hold her against everything in the world!

"But grandfather owed you fifteen thousand dollars, Mr. Henshaw."

"Yes, and there are other debts that will foot up together close on twenty thousand."

"Twenty thousand dollars of debts! How much do you think the Red House is worth with the land?"

"At a forced sale, even, I daresay it would bring twenty thousand and leave something over."

Jessica moved slowly out of the golden glory.

"That is, if it was sold today. You are only seventeen and you can't do anything about it until you are twenty-one; and you're not responsible in the law for anybody's

debts, you know. The house may be more valuable in four years, or less valuable — nobody can tell.”

“Mr. Henshaw, do you mind going now, please? I will make it all up to you some day, I promise you that. If you wouldn’t mind just going now.”

Henshaw had not relished in the least coming over to break bad news to a lonely girl. He picked up his hat and laid the papers down on the table, the will and the note.

“All right,” he said, “Jessica, I’ll go along. I wish it had been better news, but I don’t believe in smoothing over facts. My wife will come over to see you; she’ll be along this afternoon.”

She held out her ice-cold hand, but Henshaw’s circulation was always poor and his hands were as cold as hers. She realized as she hurriedly said good-bye to him, that Brian O’More was staying in his house and at the threshold of the door to which she followed him, cold and trembling, she said:

“Mr. Henshaw, did anybody at home know that you were coming over to the Bay?”

“There!” thought Henshaw. “That’s the beginning now! I’ll have to keep them apart!” . . . “Well, no,” he said easily, “Billy has gone over with Brian O’More, who was sailing for Liverpool; there was not any one at home.”

And he was gone. She stood for a few seconds immovable, cold as ice. Her youth slipped from her then at seventeen. Debts were there on the table on the piece of white paper above the blue envelope of the will — debts! And on her lips and on her hair and on her neck and cheeks the wonderful kisses of the week before! Debts and the memory of first love, the memory of Grandy — and the old house’s arms around her for a little while more!

CHAPTER V

Bridget Shaughn knelt at the foot of the green lounge rubbing Jessica's feet. It was her sovereign way of comforting; she had rubbed her little girl's feet since they had been small enough to lay in the palm of her hand.

Patrick Tryst had been buried over in the Fortune's Bay Churchyard and Jessica had scarcely spoken since, had eaten little and all day she had been walking the woods in the drenching rain. Bridget Shaughn's imagination was as keen as her wit; she understood that people must bear their troubles in their own way. The magnetic touch of her kind old hand passed to and fro over the beautiful feet. With her back to the room, Jessica crushed her face against the cushions of the lounge. Her black dress outlined her relaxed body, and, long and slender from her dark hair to her white feet, she lay a shadow in the shadow of her first sorrow. Nevertheless, little by little Bridget's presence comforted her; life could never be quite empty as long as Bridget Shaughn lived. Jessica sat up suddenly and leaning over, put both her hands on Bridget's shoulders.

"What do you think is going to happen to me?"

Bridget Shaughn knew nothing of the state of affairs. The will was not to be read until after Mr. Henshaw's return.

"Shure, you will be rich and fine, dearie, rich and fine."

"Rich!"

"Isn't it I should know how the master slaved morning and night to give you the things the mother of you was born to?"

Jessica covered Bridget's lips with her one hand.

"I haven't a penny in the world, not one penny."

"Wurra, God's mercy! With all the bank-books in the drawers?"

"Grandy has left me nothing but debts, Bridget Shaughn, and I have to keep the family name from dishonor."

"And did the old man leave ye a beggar at the door to go into the cold world?"

"A strong girl need never to be a beggar."

"And what with the bank-books — and me never touching them for fear gold might drop out of them!"

"I owe Mr. Henshaw twenty thousand dollars."

"Him with the fish hands and the fish eyes?"

The tears rose and stood in Bridget's eyes.

"I haven't cried; don't *you* cry now."

She reached out and got her stockings and put them slowly on and slipped into her shoes. She reached over to her grandfather's table.

"Where's the morning paper? I want to read what kind of work they offer girls like me."

She had already found the *Bangor Times* and bent over the advertisement page. Bridget Shaughn, close by her side, followed Jessica's fingers. With the sense of possession and admiration of one who has nursed, reared, punished and rewarded, Bridget Shaughn had watched Jessica develop from childhood to girlhood.

"And is it work you would be after, Allanah? And

me keeping the soles of your feet out of the kitchen all your life!"

Jessica followed down the column.

"You have spoiled me."

"Shure then, life won't spoil you! If it will be you have got to catch hold of it with both the young hands of you! — That's the way I did thirty years ago. But it won't be true, before God!"

"It is true."

"And what will the old house be with strangers peering in at the windows?"

"Nothing can take the house from me until I am twenty-one; it is mine until then."

"Glory be!"

"Here, Bridget Shaughn: 'Wanted at the Bangor Empire Hotel, fifteen waitresses.'"

The paper dropped from her hand to the floor. Bridget put her foot on it.

"Let it lie and the devil take it! A waitress is it!"

"People who have traditions have a high sense of honor, Bridget Shaughn."

Jessica's glance ran down to her strong, beautifully-moulded arms and hands.

"I can dance and skate and play tennis and I can cut down a tree. I am glad I am strong and young. I can work."

Bridget Shaughn looked at her, fascinated by the sudden passion of her words.

"Now I know how proud Grandy must have felt among the great trees, because he knew there was strength enough in him to cut them down."

Bridget Shaughn picked up the newspaper and spread

it out with one work-worn hand, putting it down under the girl's eyes.

"A waitress is it, Miss Jessica? With your mother coming here from Ireland that God made, and her finding me here working as I was in the kitchen beyond thirty years ago! 'You're Irish,' she was saying, 'you need not tell me! And how long will you be living in this country anyway?' And me telling her: 'Only a few years, me Lady.' (For she *was* a lady, shure, and God made her!) 'And you knew my husband when he was a baby?' she asking me, and me standing there ironing his shirts on the board that hangs as it did then behind the door (God keep it) and I was telling her: 'Shure, isn't it him I have scattered out of the kitchen as many times as I have put him to bed?' And she kisses me on both cheeks and her eyes like Heaven! And she sailing away in that cruel boat with your father not two years after, Miss Jessica! Glory be to God, they left you behind! And you reading out of the paper about waitresses!"

Jessica listened, half smiling. It was like this that she adored hearing Bridget ramble on.

She caught hold of Jessica's sleeve:

"But God in heaven, you would not be leaving me behind?"

Jessica had forgotten her, with the extreme selfishness of youth.

"Amn't I strong enough on the feet of me, and I up with the sunrise? I can walk the world and it will be something to you, shure, when you start out to tread the way, that you don't go alone."

Bridget Shaughn spoke in the richest brogue.

Jessica leaned over and kissed her.

"On both cheeks — as your mother did!"

"I'm not afraid. I know the world is full of work, Bridget Shaughn; we'll go and find it together, dear."

"Shure," said Bridget, "I'll find it anyhow. Work is the thing that never is long to be looked for! Amn't I able to do all the work here, just? Only with that lazy lout of a Mary Shafter taking a dollar and a half off us on a Tuesday! Bad luck to her! — To wash a few things! I would do better myself. Amn't I strong enough to walk the world?"

CHAPTER VI

"Please, your Ladyship, will you have tea here, your Ladyship?"

Lady Sylvia O'More turned from the window. "Here, thanks."

And the little maid came in and put the tea-tray on the table close by the window, rustling out again in her stiff print frock. Below in the garden, the hostess of the lodging house, in a black velvet dress and white lace cap, sat under a golden beech, surrounded by a flock of white doves which she fed from her hand, scattering the crumbs and calling them by name.

Lady Sylvia had been looking at the scene for some time, hardly conscious of its picturesqueness. The lodging, meagre and cold, in spite of its gay chintz, was all she could afford. She poured herself a cup of tea and drank it standing, not touching toast or scone.

The late October day had a chill in it; the figure in the black velvet gown seemed to be part of the dusk and the white doves made spots like light against the twilight.

Lady Sylvia was dressed to go out and after she had finished her tea, put on her gloves, went slowly downstairs into the evening streets towards Christ Church. The beauty of the town spoke to her every step of the way, and she was proud that Brian should be part of it and making his University tradition. She always wore

black and it suited her blonde, cold beauty admirably. In a blonde cold fashion she had adored her Irish husband and she had never put on colors since he died. She was tall and carried herself like a girl.

At the gate of Christ Church she stopped before going in to look up at the old trees, soft in the evening light and leafy, in spite of the showers of leaves that had fallen all day. It had been a long golden autumn. Against the early dusk the college buildings were dark as velvet, tradition in every line of their stones.

Lady Sylvia had come up from the south of France, where her husband's brother, the last O'More but Brian, was dying. It was more than probable that when she returned to her lodgings she would find a wire telling her that her brother-in-law had passed away; this would make Brian the successor.

The air was full of rooks that flew, calling down in clouds, and as she went through the gate, down the avenue, between the great old trees, as though he were flying towards her, his black cap upon his head, the skirt of his black gown fluttering back in the wind, a young man came running.

It was Brian O'More. She had never realized how tall he was, how big. Lady Sylvia had many mental pictures of her son, but she kept this one always with special tenderness — Brian flying down the alley of Christ Church the evening of late October, 19 .

"Mother! How ripping! I didn't think you would have been here so soon. Come up to my room, mother."

He put his hand in her muff, the other arm round her. They were alone in the alley. She was conscious of the difference between Celts and Britons with Brian; he

was a born lover and fell in love with his mother when he was a baby and he never fell out of love with her until the end.

"Catch your breath, mother." His little room was up in the eaves of the old wing of Christ Church. "I came high up," he said, "because I made up my mind that any one who really wanted to see me would come up here. On the first floor, where I was last term, it is too great a temptation; everybody comes pouring in. It *is* high, but after you get up here it is good, isn't it!"

It was good and the window, giving on to the soft goldenness of the trees and the river, framed for him a square of perfect ancient beauty. His lamp was lit under its green shade; the light fell on his open book underneath and his mother sat down in his study-chair under the light.

"It *is* a dear room." She looked about. From the dusk on the walls, peering out into the room up here in the old world, were the great mooseheads. "Brian, they are superb! Did you *really, really* get them?"

"Did you think that I bought them at a shop on the way home? Not that kind, mother! You will read — I've written it all in my diary."

"Your letters were delightful for once! Up to the last I read them aloud to your uncle! He revelled in them. . . . Come here." She drew him over to her and looked long in his face and kissed him lightly.

"I haven't seen you since you went to the States."

"I know."

"Since you have been back your letters are different. I understand you wanted to wait and have a long talk. Your uncle is terribly, terribly ill, Brian."

"I am sorry," he said, "heart sorry — you know it, mother."

"He talked about you," said his mother quietly, "a great deal. He counts on you, Brian — you can't think how much! He has his ideas — he expects you to pull the property together, to make your mark in Ireland. He is horribly pessimistic about the relations in future with England; he is so terribly conservative. He is all for the Empire and bitterly opposed to Home Rule. He wants you to follow along on his line."

"Mother," said the boy, "please don't go on speaking as though he were dead."

"You must face it, Brian — it is coming soon."

Sitting on the opposite side of the table from her, balancing a paper-knife across his fingers, O'More listened as his mother talked of his uncle's political opinions, of his uncle's schemes and plans for the property. Irish politics and Irish problems were vague to him. He was absorbed in thinking:

"Here is my mother. I have been waiting for this. I want to tell her about *Jess*."

He heard her say that he was the last of his race, that everything depended on him. He heard her say: "You *must* be ready, Brian, you *must* be ready."

He said: "How can I be ready, mother? I am what I am; I can't be anything else."

"Last year was a bad year for you, dearest. That's why I let you go to the States, why I urged you to go. I paid up everything you owed, all the little bills, and it was not easy to get the money, Brian. I have had to make sacrifices, but we won't speak of it again."

"It was wonderful of you!" he murmured. "Wonderful!"

"Oh, no," she said, smiling. "It is only just . . . mother . . . that's all!"

He had been planning all the afternoon, turning over in his mind how he could speak to his mother of Jessica Tryst. He had not been able to write to her. He loved Jess; he was sure of it. She was all he wanted in the world. But he had not been able to yet frame a phrase in which he should tell this to his mother. All day the image and figure of Jessica had filled his room; some of the time she had been in the window-seat in her scarlet cloak, with her dear dark head pressed against the glass, as though she were watching out for him; or she had been snuggled up in the corner of the shabby sofa, curled up like a delicious sleepy kitten, warm and soft and lovely and so vital had been his feeling regarding her that he had almost spoken to her aloud. He felt that he was housing up here a girl wife, keeping captive a star!

Lady Sylvia O'More, blonde and cold, his book open under her hand, was a very different picture in her black austere dress to brilliant Jess. She was frightfully smart, very good-looking, and he was proud of her, proud of her race, of her breeding, proud to be her son. But — how could he speak to her of Jessica?

She was saying now, "You see, Brian, we are so frightfully poor."

"*Don't* I know it?"

"In spite of the land — there is far too much of it, by the way — the inheritance is really a great big beautiful burden. You'll have to carry it and be fine in the way you carry it — and you must marry."

She was coming near the great subject now.

"I know I am the last O'More," he said. He got up

and put his hands in his pockets and stood near to her. Over there on the sofa Jessica's face grew grave; she seemed to wait for him to speak her name aloud.

"It is not only because you are the last O'More," his mother said. "You'll have to marry money, Brian, in order to keep up the property."

"Oh," he exclaimed, "I am not yet twenty and my uncle is still living and you speak of a marriage for money!"

Lady Sylvia looked up quickly. It frightened her when she saw in her son anything that resembled his reckless Irish soldier father.

"I have kept you from really knowing what poverty is, dear."

He bent and kissed her.

"Don't bother about it now," Lady Sylvia said. "I hate just as you do to lay plans for the future whilst your poor uncle is still living. We'll talk about things another time."

"I shan't be of age for two years," said the boy. "And I hope Uncle Brian will live for years and years."

His mother said with feeling: "Dearest, he can't live for days and days even. When I get back to my lodging I may find a wire."

(Jessica had moved away from the sofa now; she was over in the window waiting; she seemed to say: "Let's run away and be married. What are earldoms and successions to a love marriage?")

His mother was looking up to him lovingly. Lady Sylvia was his first love. He had fallen desperately in love with her when he was six years old.

Brian never thought about money unless the subject

was forced down his throat. When the Henshaws had introduced him to Jessica Tryst they had said: "She is the prettiest girl in Maine and rich." And now there was a letter in the drawer over there from Billy Henshaw!

"You remember Jessica Tryst? Her grandfather died bankrupt; she has not a farthing."

That was all that he had heard of Jessica Tryst. But over there, in the window, the picture of her was fading.

"Your Uncle Brian wants you to go round the world when you have taken your degree. Don't worry about the silly money marriage — you have plenty of time. Only I thank God that you have no love-affair to break your heart over."

"Mother," he began, "I want to tell you

But she was going on: "It would kill me if you'd been like a lot of fellows, Brian, with some horrid woman in the background."

She rose. She was nearly as tall as her big son. She kissed him.

"It is getting dark and you must work. Don't take me downstairs — just let me slip out."

He would tell her tomorrow!

She crossed the little room, leaning on his arm, telling him bits of gossip, seeming to possess him, to own him as she had framed and made him for her race and for her traditions.

"Good-night, darling. Try not to work too late and don't worry. We have got each other, thank God!"

(Jessica! Oh, Jessica! Soft eyes, soft lips and rich dark hair!)

Over on his table lay his diary, a favorite worn old black book.

(This book is in the Library at Castle O'More today — Brian O'More's notebook. It begins, thirtieth of September, 18 , when he first started to write in it in verses to J. T.:

“Oh, lovely, laughing Irish eyes,
Blue as your Erin lakes and skies.

This follows the spirited, brilliant description of the moose hunt in the north wood of Maine; and from then on the little book is faithfully kept until it ends its story in the autumn of 1918 with the British victory of the tanks in Flanders.)

The door closed upon his mother and he turned back into his room. In the corner of the old worn divan were a few scattered books and a shabby leather pillow. There was a cigarette box on one chair, a blazer on another. Visions and images were gone. Tomorrow he would tell his mother everything.

What was everything?

That on a certain September day he had kissed a poor pretty girl, daughter of a lumber merchant over there in the States! He had not asked her to marry him — *that* was his little love-story!

(How gaily the dancing feet tapped the boards of the dancing-stand! “I want you, my Honey! Yes, I do!”)

Honey! The sweetest honey was upon Jessica's lips. He had taken her first kisses — sparkles and fires they could be called. There must be love matches and runaway matches in his family; he would look them up. Outside from the belfrey of the chapel came a hymn ringing out:

“The Son of God goes forth to War.”

His father had been poor and nothing else but a

soldier. He would rather be a poor soldier, free to make a love-match, than Lord O'More, with a money-marriage forced upon him. He sat down before his open book and turned his diary's leaves slowly. Oh lovely, laughing Irish eyes! — But their brilliant light had dimmed!

Over in the window seat — she loved window-seats — over in the window-seat all curled up, her dark head against the pane, in her simple dress, her honey-red lips drooped and her Irish eyes with a spark of dream in them, Jessica faded and was gone.

Brian O'More was studying deep in his book when a messenger brought him a note from his mother two hours later. There was a pink telegram in the letter: "Pau — October — Lord O'More died at two o'clock today."

"My dearest boy: This wire was here when I came back from you tonight. I kiss you tenderly, my darling, and wish you long life and happiness. Come to me early tomorrow.

Mother."

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BOOK II



CHAPTER I

"Got some news for you, Mr. Herrick."

"Fire ahead, Raff!"

Fred Herrick sprawled out on the unyielding mattress of a narrow iron bed, whose patent springs rose and collapsed with every move of his big body. He lay with his hands behind his head, looking up at his trainer, a successful nerve-specialist, something of a genius and something of a charlatan.

Rafferty was his boss now. Fred Herrick had signed a contract to this effect when he had been permitted as a great favor to enter Black Fish at an enormous premium. This rest-cure for broken-down business men and millionaires was one of the fads of the day and Herrick had paid an enormous bonus for the privilege of being a private patient.

Rafferty said: "Interested, by any chance, in the Consolidated Oil?"

"Just a little bit."

Herrick at twenty-five was a dissipated wreck. To put himself in shape and to keep his father from definitely cutting him out of his will, he had given himself entirely into Rafferty's hands. Rafferty had made a fortune hammering at souls and bodies. Now, his hands in the pockets of his brown linen coat, his eyes a little mocking and full of humor, the trainer considered indulgently his youngest and his favorite patient.

Rafferty's Cure fronted a clean pine forest. Insistent, full of laughter, a challenge to sanity and cheer, Black Fish, a brook-like river, noisy, incessant, ran under the windows on its journey to Fortune Bay.

Bad for diseased nerves?

Rafferty said noise was good for cranky folk. It interrupted nasty thinking. His patients must grow accustomed to Black Fish.

"Shocks are part of your cure, Raff?" laughed Fred Herrick.

"By Gad," said the trainer, "rich men need to be shaken, flicked on the raw, Mr. Herrick! The only thing they care for is money, money, money!"

Herrick grinned. "Look here, Rafferty, if you are so darned indifferent to money, why do you charge me forty dollars a day at this joint of yours?"

"Why *shouldn't* you pay me well?" Rafferty stared at him coolly. "What you've cut out on drinks and joyrides has a clear right to come *my* way! Forty dollars a day! Call *that* high pay for my company? It's cheap. Before you get through with me here your shirt will freeze overnight when you have washed it and hung it up, and you will break the ice off it before you put it on — that's what *you* will do! Out-of-doors will suit *you*, Herrick."

"May I have a cigarette meanwhile, Rafferty?"

Rafferty took a case from his pocket and offered Fred one, watching the trembling hand.

"First smoke, Raff, in four days! Glorious! It's worth a hundred dollars! So oil has gone up ten points?"

"Forget it!" retorted the trainer curtly. "Get down to boxing for an hour before lunch. By the time you're

ready for your shower you ought to be sweatin' like a horse."

* * *

An hour and a half later Fred Herrick lolled into the dining-room to his table near the window, under which Black Fish roared and shouted. The noise of the water was so loud that the rattling of the dishes was softened to a murmur.

"This is what they call a rest cure!" he thought to himself. "It's Bedlam! A cotton mill is a country meadow compared to this hullabaloo."

He had no appetite. Being off his drink unnerved him, made him flabby, listless, dull. Lacking pick-me-ups and stimulant there was nothing in Fred Herrick, intellectually or physically, to serve as spur. Rafferty was endeavoring to discover something stimulating to him outside of himself and alcohol.

The dining-room was full and the waitresses were unusually busy. Fred watched his fellow-patients: fagged-out business men; heavy drinkers; men weighed down by riches, lacking healthy exercise; business men to whom familiar sounds were clanging trolleys, horns of motors, the hurry of the crowd.

Herrick glanced at the bill of fare. An hour's boxing had not flicked his appetite. He had taken a prescribed walk of four miles and in following a narrow path he had caught a peep of the figure of a pretty girl and tried to catch up with her; but she had the head start and the flash of a pink gown among the trunks of the cedars and pines had been the one bright note during his stay at Black Fish.

"Any one taken your order, sir?"

He did not look up at the girl who spoke.

"You might bring me some steak."

"There's some very nice fish today."

"Caught three days ago, I guess," Herrick laughed, "sent to New York and brought back here — that's right?"

"All the fish on the bill of fare was caught here this morning."

Fred turned slowly round and looked up. The waitress who served him habitually was bountifully supplied with freckles, wore eyeglasses and her form was large and generous. This woman, standing so patiently in her pink gingham dress and white apron, little neat cap and white cuffs, was slender enough to be drawn through a wedding-ring.

"Why, you're new?"

"I've been here a week, but in the other dining-room. Shall I bring you some 'Black' Fish?"

"Recommend it specially?"

"Everybody seems to think it is delicious."

He leaned forward, staring at her beauty until she blushed.

"I'll leave it to you. Fix me up a nice little lunch. Bring something good — anything."

With the habit of the rich man who pays and cannot pay fast enough for what he wants, Herrick ran his fingers into his pockets and fished out a bill, which he folded and handed to her. There was an instinctive start on the part of the girl, but she took the money and stuffed it into her apron belt, then scribbled the order on her pad.

"Broiled fish, potatoes and fruit. Is that all right?"

"Good enough, fine! And a quart of White Rock."

Fred smiled cheerfully, sat back interested. He could hardly wait for his luncheon, which now began to seem tempting. But before the girl came back he had to watch her serve two men at the next table. Far down the room he saw her come in and followed each movement of her supple body as she walked, carrying high on her fine arms and hands the tray full of dishes. She held it well up, like a caryatid.

"Heavens!" he grumbled. "What hogs people are to eat like that! That tray must weigh a ton."

The girl's cheeks were brilliant; her lifted arms gave her figure away and the simple dress which she wore did nothing to conceal it. She put her tray down on a little table near — turnips, tomatoes, chicken, olives, celery, bread and butter, ice, bottles.

"By Jove! What hogs people are!"

And she was gone, with another tray of empty dishes held well above her head.

He was glad that he had ordered so little and longed to carry her tray, to take it forcibly when she came back with his lunch. It was on the tip of his tongue to say: "It is a darned shame for you to carry food for me!" then realized that the pretty girl was only a waitress, a strong country thing whose business it was to carry dishes, clean the dining-room and the upstairs rooms and then doubtless, go off on a trolley to Portland to a "movie." "Working people have no nerves," he thought; "they like work." Always a soothing reflection to the man of leisure! "They are used to work — they don't know what to do without it!"

She had arranged his meal neatly before him.

"So *that's* the fish, is it?"

"Yes, sir."

"It looks something like a real fish."

"I asked cook specially for it."

He was flattered and delighted. What a peach of a girl!

She went back to bring the celery and olives.

"The bill you gave me just now was too much for an ordinary fee — I can't take it."

"Oh, that's all right. Don't you bother about that! You're here to make all the money you can, aren't you?"

Fred served himself to fish and potatoes, and it was tempting. His appetite had begun to assert itself.

"Yes," she answered him, "I *am* here to make all the money I can, but no girl gets twenty dollars for serving a meal."

Fred smiled. "Was it only twenty dollars? Well, it isn't enough!"

"I will keep it, because, as you say, I am working for my living, but you must not give me anything more while I am here."

"We'll talk about that! You get me up some nice little meals and I shall feel that the money is more than well spent."

"Vanilla, peach and strawberry ice-cream, lemon-pie, custard-pie and huckleberry-pie," she offered him practically, as though to call the matter closed.

". . . And what's the matter with the apple pie?" Herrick asked this with a little contented laugh. He began to feel human. "I'll take some apple pie and vanilla ice-cream."

CHAPTER II

"Ham 'n aigs — two corns — two mashed — 'n hurry *mine* up, Mis' Shaughn."

The swinging doors between kitchen and dining-room swished in and out. Groups of waitresses around the red-hot stove called out their orders in sharp New England voices and a white-capped negro filled the little stone-ware dishes on the girls' trays from the various boilers on his stove.

The kitchen of Rafferty's reeked with smells of cooking and the effluvia of working humanity.

There were two cooks, the big negro and a tired-faced old Irish woman. The black cook came forward with a plate of bacon and eggs.

"Hyar, chilen, dis am fo' *Miss Lady*." And he carefully placed it on the tray of Fred Herrick's waitress, who stood waiting for him to fill her tray. It was late — past seven — and the last suppers being served.

"Say, come on, Jess, and go to the moving pictures tonight, won't you?"

"Not tonight, Mira — I get all the 'moving' I want here!"

Mira laughed. "Oh, come on n' go. We've got a couple of teams — it will be awful fun!"

The waitress lifted her tray high on her hands for the twentieth time that day and made her way past her companions.

"Come, go on, Mis' Lady! It will rest you more than going to bed; any change does."

"*You* get her to go, Mrs. Shaughn," a girl at the side of the Irish cook asked Bridget, "*you* make her."

"Shure," the cook lifted her hot face, "if pleasure doesn't make itself wanted, what would I be doing to force it on herself?"

Bridget Shaughn stirred her steaming saucepan with a wooden spoon.

"There's not much taste in a thing an' it goes agin the palate."

The handsome waitress had disappeared. She went by the name of "Miss Lady" among the girls, not because they thought that she was proud — she gave herself no airs — but they called her by this name in unconscious tribute.

Upstairs, two hours later, in the hot attic room which she shared with Bridget Shaughn, in slip-bodice and short petticoat, stockingless, Jessica stood before the open window.

"Bridget Shaughn, how can I clear Grandy's debts away?"

"Mother of God, Miss Jessica, it is no man's right to patch up another man's wrongs."

"I'm made like that."

She got up slowly from the chair and went over to the little top drawer in the little wooden bureau where she kept her belongings.

"I've got a twenty-dollar bill here, Bridget Shaughn — one of my 'tables' gave it to me today."

"Now that was a fine thing! He must have been a real gentleman."

"I didn't want to take it, but I did because of Grandy's debts. I've got to make all the money I can, *all the money I can.*"

She put it away and locked the drawer.

"Come on to bed, Miss Jessica, dear. That ghostly bell will be ringin' us at five."

"I shall send the money tomorrow to Mr. Henshaw."

The old woman half sat up in her bed.

"You will not! It's shoes you're wanting and a power of things — you, that has always had all you want!"

"And with other fees I shall be able to send him fifty dollars or more. That leaves four thousand five hundred and fifty dollars."

"What a world it would be," said the Irish woman, "without money in it! And without working people growing too old to be wanted! It's laying it up I am agin Rafferty, for the day I came here and he had his eyes on my grey hairs. 'It's too old you are!' says he! If it hadn't been so much depended on us getting a sure job, I'd have said to him: 'I'll be working, my boy, when you're laid up with apoplexy' — and him a trainer. Come on to bed, Miss Jessica, dear, come to bed."

"In four years I can give Mr. Henshaw the house."

The old woman covered her eyes with her hand. Many a time when Jessica had fallen asleep she had wiped away tears that came in her longing for the old red homestead, where she had lived and worked in peace for thirty years.

"Come to bed, Miss Jessica, child."

The girl slipped out of her few garments and put on her nightdress. She took out the few pins from her hair, which fell over her shoulders in shadow after shadow.

"Was he a fine rich gentleman, dearie?"

"Who?"

"Him that gave you the twenty dollar bill?"

"I dare say he is rich — most of the men who come here are."

Jessica moved slowly over to the small, narrow, uncomfortable cot on which she passed the nights after exhausting days of work. The night was so hot that bed clothes were insupportable. She threw her hair loose over the pillow and lay down as she was, curling up her white feet.

Bridget Shaughn leaned up on her pillow.

"Sure, an' I'll rub the feet of ye, dearie, for five minutes."

"Bridget Shaughn, you must be crazy!"

"It makes my heart ache just to think how tired they get! In and out, up and down, from five in the morning until ten at night! Wurra, wurra — a lady like you!"

"Hush!" said the girl. "I shall be asleep in a minute. Good-night."

She curled herself on her arms. Tired she was, but she was young and vivid with health and strength. Work, hard work had only served to develop her greater beauty; she was growing handsomer every day. The twenty dollars had not been the only large fee she had received at the sanatorium. The eyes of all the men turned to her and it was only because of her good temper and her fine comradeship with the girls who worked with her that she was not hated for the popularity. They could not hate her; on the contrary, they loved her.

"I'll be making something special tomorrow for the kind gentleman that gave you that, dearie."

"The bill of fare is quite good enough for him," said the girl sleepily.

"He is a fine gentleman, is he not, Miss Jessica?"

The girl's answer came hesitatingly: "Well, I don't think he is *quite* a gentleman, if you know what I mean, dear."

"Shure," replied the old woman stoutly, "after living thirty years with men like your father and grandfather, Miss Jessica, I should be ashamed not to know the real thing."

"Thank you, Bridget. And that's the way I feel and I don't believe I could make a mistake."

CHAPTER III

It was Jessica's Sunday afternoon out. Heretofore, life had been one long, free day to wander in as she pleased and the fact of being tied down to long hours with no holiday except Sunday afternoon, made Sunday assume an importance difficult to measure! There were so many things she wanted to do in it that she usually ended by doing nothing at all but walking as far as she could into the woods, finally to throw herself down on the piney ground to rest and sleep or read. On this afternoon she had come to a favorite place of hers and in a nest of pine needles and ferns she settled herself to read. It was a climb to get to her nest and once there she saw reaching below her, aisle after aisle of blue and pink distance of forest. The wood corridors stretched away down into the deeper shadow at the hill's foot — odors of pine and cedar came divine, clean and familiar. Jessica never saw a tree without thinking of Grandy and she loved trees for his sake and for their own.

She was grateful that she had not been forced to go far away from the woods to make her living, for these wonderful comforters were around her here. The forest had always been her childhood's Wonder World, full of mystery and fancy; a book of enchantment. Later, she brought her romantic dreams to the woods, read her favorite books and love-stories in the trees' company. The beauty of these woods and the curtain that fell before

her was so splendid that the ugly sanatorium was blotted out of sight and mind. She could forget dish washing and soap and water and dish-cloths and mops and pails and dusters here, forget the noise of dishes thundering around her ears as the cards did around Alice's ears in "Alice in Wonderland."

She tried to get up before sunrise to get on with her studies, but her youth rebelled and she fell asleep over books. Now she spread an ancient history of Greece and Rome out on her knees and began to read.

Rafferty had built a running track near by and there he usually took a sprint on Sunday afternoons; but it was far enough away not to be in view. She knew herself to be unobserved. On these free afternoons she might wear her black dress in memory of Grandy and thin pretty stockings and neat shoes. As she held her book she caught sight of her thumbnail broken down by hard work; she tucked it away between the leaves not to see it, and wrinkled her fine brows.

Like this she had been sitting when O'More had thrown himself down beside her. How long ago! How long ago had she heard the dancing feet on the platform and the sound of the village orchestra playing ragtime?

"How do you do?"

She started violently. Standing below her, fashionably dressed in immaculate summer clothes, "Table No. 13," the patient who had given her the twenty dollars, smiled up at her. She shut the book hastily.

"Don't get up, please — I don't want to disturb." Herrick climbed up. "All alone by yourself, are you?"

He stood irresolutely and the next moment had thrown

himself down beside her, his legs crossed and his hat between his hands; he fanned himself.

"Good to get out here like this, isn't it? Away from all that rattle! Fine out of doors!"

Herrick's face was red, his eyes were flushed. Jessica had not been eighteen months at Rafferty's without knowing what certain signs meant. She got up quickly.

"I must be going. I must be going back."

But he caught her by the skirt.

"Don't hurry away like that. I've climbed all the way up here just to see you."

"Please"

With a swift motion which switched her skirt out of his hand she hurried on down the little hillside.

"Oh, come back! Won't you be nice and good?"

He followed, talking in his thickly-clouded tones. She walked fast and he at her side. As they came to the base of the hill into the opening of the forest, he said:

"See here, what's the good of being so proud to a fellow who only wants to be nice to you?"

"I don't want you to be nice to me, Mr. Herrick. Please let me alone."

Her eagerness to escape, her grace and the more accentuated charm that her own clothes gave her were too much for Herrick. He caught her arm between his fingers; under the thin linen of her blouse her flesh felt round and firm.

"See here, don't be naughty — all I want is to have a good time and give you a good time."

"Let me go! Let me go!"

"By Jove," he said thickly, "you are the dandiest girl I ever saw in my life, the *very* prettiest."

And the next moment Jessica, who had known nothing of a vulgar touch in her life, to whom love's first impression had been given with such charm in the moonlight near her own home, found herself in this man's arms.

She screamed, struggled. She was strong, but he was stronger. An appalling sense of the weakness of woman before a man's will smote her with such force that she never forgot it all her life. She put out her hand with all her force and thrust him from her and cried for help.

In the next moment she felt his hot face, his breath heavy with liquor, against hers. She did not faint.

It seemed as though the hand of God or some great power picked him up, picked him off her. A powerful clutch fell between Fred Herrick's shoulders and he was torn away from Jessica. She stood there, neither trembling nor weeping, fiercely angry, for a second only, to catch her breath, for support leaning against one of the trees, as it were against one of her friends.

Rafferty, in running drawers and thin shirt, was giving him a sound thrashing. It was a dreadful but a beautiful scene to the outraged girl. She was horrified, but fascinated. Between his blows Rafferty heard her saying:

"Oh, if I had only been strong enough!"

And again he heard her cry: "There, Mr. Rafferty, that's enough! Let him go, let him go!"

Rafferty stood over what seemed to be a bunch of clothes.

"Get up when you want to and walk home."

Then he went over to Jessica:

"Now, you come along with me, Miss Tryst, I will see you home."

CHAPTER IV

Rafferty was taking an hour off in what he called his guest parlor, a room in which he heard the tales of woe of his "rich Johnnies." According to his taste, the room was "a wonder." He said that he had given the decorator "his head," and the decorator had certainly taken it. The walls were covered with expensive damask; the furniture was ornate and flashy; there were comfortable chairs and lounges. On one side of the wall, incongruous against the dark red damask, hung his old boxing gloves, his fencing foils and a glass case filled with the medals won in the ring. Pictures of race horses and of famous pugilists, photographs of himself in boxing attitudes, and appreciative select photographs of popular actresses and cinema stars, furnished the room's decorations.

He always dressed in white clothes, thin in summer, white serge in winter, and he was sitting reading a sporting paper before the wide open window under which Black Fish roared and cascaded. One of the housemaids came in in answer to his ring.

"Say, Lizzie, was you up to do Mr. Herrick's rooms this morning?"

"Yes."

"Didn't happen to ask to see me the way he was doing all yesterday?"

"Yes, he asked about every fifteen seconds, I guess."

"You tell him to come on down, if he asks again."

Don't, though, unless he *asks* — then say, 'Go on down, I guess he'll see you.'"

Lizzie went out.

All the rest Rafferty ever took was this hour. He had been starving poor in his life; he had discovered that he could fight in a beer saloon in one of the lowest parts of San Francisco and had fought his way into clean morals, good health, sobriety and honesty.

"Come in."

The door opened. Fred Herrick, pale as death, slunk in, his eyes so darkly rimmed that they might have been black eyes driven into his head by a fist. Herrick's education was as different to that of Rafferty's as is the education of a rich young man to a guttersnipe's. He went up to Rafferty holding out his hand, which trembled like a leaf.

"Rafferty, I don't expect you to take it — I am just holding it out to you God, it won't keep still! I want to apologize."

The prize-fighter did not take the hand.

Herrick stood back a bit and then sank into a chair and sat there, breathing quickly and trembling, his bloodshot eyes fixed on his trainer.

"I don't know what to say to you, Mr. Herrick!"

"I don't wonder."

"I can gas on about bad habits; I've slung a lot of professional dope up here. But it don't fit this. These girls are country girls and decent sorts of types. That's why I can keep them. They're not the *run* of women *you're* accustomed to."

"Say . . . don't go on, please, Rafferty!"

"You'll be all right to travel tomorrow, Mr. Herrick."

Fred Herrick gave him an appealing look. "I'll do anything you want me to but *go!* Look here, Rafferty. . . ."

He did not say: "It's not a great crime kissing a pretty girl, is it?" The excuse would not come to his lips; but he laid hold of all the manhood in him and leaning forward, said intensely:

"Try me on — I'll give you my word of honor, not only that I won't ever give you any cause for such displeasure as you feel now, but *I will make good.* I'll turn out of here trim and fit. One more chance, Raff! You see, I had had some booze."

In spite of his clean dislike for all that touched immorality with women — for he was as chivalrous as a knight — Rafferty liked this patient.

"Cut it out, Herrick," he said roughly. "Take and brace up! Go and run round the course a couple of times before dinner, get some pep in you . . . *Can you walk?*"

"You bet, Raff — so long as it's not *walking out.*"

"Get some air."

He handed Herrick a note: "Your dad's been here, Mr. Herrick."

The blood flew into Fred's cheeks.

"You *told him?*"

"Had to — couldn't put you out of Black Fish without letting him know. It isn't your apologizing that's keeping you here; it's that old man's face."

Fred folded the letter up and put it into his pocket. He was at the door when Rafferty said with a humorous grin:

"You're a good picker when it comes to girls, Mr. Herrick!" And he followed his patient to the door: "But get wise to this — if I ever see you speak to her again, there won't be enough of you left to *get home.*"

CHAPTER V

"Say, Miss Lady, how is Mrs. Shaughn today?"

"Better, thank you, Mira."

"That's good."

Almira Fern called to Jessica from one end of the dining-room.

"Say, isn't Mrs. Shaughn a relation of yours?"

"My dearest friend."

"Them's the best kind of relations," said the girl shortly.

Jessica wore a blue gingham dress, fresh as a forget-me-not, a small smart apron, a low white collar fastened by a little pin that had been her mother's. She stood there with the roaring river back of her and the summer light, shaded by the dark green blind, her hair neatly brushed and combed and twisted and the little cap on top of it was incongruous, pretty though it was. She did not look like a New England waitress in the least; she looked like a woman of fashion masquerading for a fancy-dress ball, like a soubrette on the stage. No uniform of any kind could have hidden what she was in her. At her elbows her dress stopped short, for the day was hot and she had put on a short-sleeved blouse, and her beautiful arms with their fine moulding and the blue veins were in contrast to her hands, already growing coarser with their vulgar duties.

The trainer Rafferty came in through the door at the

end of the dining-room. Almira rustled to the farthest table and Rafferty came down to where Jessica stood, arranging the salt cellars for five tables on her little serving tray.

Rafferty was polite to the extent of great formality; it was his idea of keeping up the style of the place; he never permitted himself the slightest familiarity with any of his servitors. He was just and kind and extremely strict; they were all afraid of him, yet they all respected him. He turned his broad magnificent back to the corner of the room where Almira Fern was busy and which in a few minutes she left and discreetly went out of the room.

"Look here, Miss Tryst, I've been wanting to apologize to you ever since day before yesterday."

Overwhelmed with embarrassment, disgusted, by the recollection of the most dreadful moment in her life, Jessica had been trying to forget it. She threw up her handsome head defiantly, as though even as she thanked Rafferty she defied mankind.

"I'm mighty sorry it happened to my cure! But every man ain't a gentleman" — Rafferty pronounced it "gennleman." "I stand for you, girl, who serve me, and to hell with Herrick, even if he is rich enough to buy the State."

All Rafferty's movements were graceful; he was so perfectly made, so beautifully formed. It was the unconscious grace of the big, perfect animal. He leaned on the table by which he was standing.

"Ever do any laundry work?"

Jessica had never even washed a handkerchief, Bridget Shaughn had spoiled her so.

"I'm going to remove you from the dining-room and put you in the laundry."

A light broke over her face.

"Can I go before luncheon?"

"O. K. I'll put Miss Fern over here to wait on Mr. Herrick and if you don't like laundry work and find it is too hard for you, just tip me the wink."

CHAPTER VI

Jess turned her iron up and put it on its rest, but she did not pull down her sleeves to make ready. Her cheeks were like American beauty roses. The collar of her striped blouse was open wide and the milk whiteness of her neck and the dark impressive eyes, and the whole youth and rich loveliness of her, made her something on which eyes loved to rest.

The forelady looked at her in undisguised admiration. There was no one like Jessica Tryst on the staff.

"I am not going to dinner. I want to finish this roll of napkins while they are damp. I'll come on later."

The girls went off singing — happy, friendly groups. Ambitions did not break their hearts; they had no sorrows that good salaries and sufficient comforts would not heal! But Jessica bent to her ironing board with aching heart. Each day she valued more and more those things which her grandfather's financial disaster had robbed her of forever.

How calm and beautiful the little home-life in the Red House seemed to her now! How intimate and lovely the atmosphere of the rafted room! How warm it glowed in lamp-light, and how friendly at noon after dinner, sitting with Grandy while he smoked and talked whilst she sewed! What charm to watch the seasons cast their spell over the forest and garden, a pleasure dear to beauty-loving natures! She remembered how the autumn

leaves whirled like ghosts against the long window panes and the first breaths of autumn from the piney woods, bringing clear intoxicating draughts!

She was not unwilling to work. She was growing to like physical labor in which she could exercise all her muscles. There was never a moment of inactivity. It was the future for which she was not fitted of which she was afraid.

As she ironed, the warm fumes of the linen came pleasantly to her nostrils. She was alone in the long room, with all its windows open to the sun and working out music, she unconsciously began to hum a song over her ironing:

“When hope runs high and love is young,
All roads lead where roads should go!”

Rafferty opened the laundry door and came in slowly, smiling.

“Say, go on, Miss Tryst! Don’t stop for me.”

Jessica was putting the napkins which she had finished in piles. Rafferty, a clean, invigorating sight, came and sat on the side of the table near her.

“It’s refreshing to see somebody who’s not a mass of tangled nerves and imaginary woes. You get *me*, Miss Tryst?”

She laughed. “You must be tired of sick people, Mr. Rafferty.”

“You bet I am!”

“But you do them such a lot of good.”

“Good, nothing. What they need is *work*! And to lose every bloomin’ cent and come down to know what real things are! If I could take away their fortunes I could give them back a slick set of nerves all right. But

cures don't last. Why, Miss Tryst, a man that knows that he can draw his cheque for anything on God's earth from a steam yacht to buying a woman from her lawful husband doesn't know what true pleasure *is!*"

Rafferty put out his big hand and drew a chair from behind the ironing board and sat down.

"Why ain't you over to lunch?"

She did not want to tell him that she had a headache; she did not want to confess another ill to this delightful, healthy-looking man who seemed to despise sickness.

"I thought I would finish this last dozen of napkins."

Rafferty pulled out his watch.

"My car's there. I am running over to Black Fish Junction to eat a piece of pie and some cheese and drink a glass of milk at the grocery store. I do that every now and again just to strike out," he struck out his great arms as he spoke, "to hit away from this bag here! I sit up to the counter and Paul Jenkins fishes me out a few eatables from any old box at hand, and his mother makes the pie, and you take it from me, Miss Tryst, it makes a darned good meal!"

He smiled, showing two rows of spotless teeth. Jessica also smiled, showing two more rows of spotless teeth.

"You get your hat and we'll go over and sit up on stools and laugh at Paul Jenkins. Say, will you come?"

It was not the invitation of Fred Herrick, it was not the look of Fred Herrick. It was a big, affectionate, clean, kind invitation. She could not refuse.

The door was open. Outside Rafferty's big snow-white Pierce Arrow waited. His chauffeur, a negro, sat with one leg over the door, waiting peacefully in the sunlight,

glad to go and glad to do nothing, eternally glad with the good humor of the South.

Jessica turned and took her cotton sunbonnet down from the peg behind the laundry door.

"The bonnet's all right," said Rafferty. "I don't care and the nigger doesn't care and Jenkins don't!"

She cast a glance behind her at the ironing board, put the iron which she was using on the back of the stove and followed him out into the sweet air and the smelling pines.

"You won't need a jacket, it's so warm." He helped her into the car.

CHAPTER VII

She took to her work with character and spirit

"Noblesse oblige!"

"We cannot live life out in one day," she said to herself. "I am young and nothing can hurt or touch what's *here*."

She was the first one up and looked out of the window into the dewy morning. She was a bright, strong, brilliant young spirit, and beauty had laid its hand upon her. It was a pleasure to her mates to watch her at her work, to see her deep, full-chested figure, her generous, fine arms and her graceful swing as she walked; and she was loved everywhere.

Jessica's first philosophies were being evolved from a clear-thinking, fine young brain.

That evening she found on her bed a florist's box. She could not believe her eyes when she saw her name on the tag. As she lifted the lid, American Beauty roses lay there red and heavy in their green leaves. Fascinated and aghast she stared at her first box of flowers. There was a note. She took it from the envelope slowly, hardly believing that it was for her.

"My dear Miss Tryst:

I want to apologize. I was not myself that day — not much of an excuse, but the only one. I am going to

New York for a few days. Perhaps when I return you will tell me that you have forgiven me?

Yours very sincerely,

FREDERICK HERRICK."

Jessica did not know what to do with the flowers. She did not dare to keep them in the room she shared with *Molly* and *Mira*. She touched them, smelt them and did not want to let them go.

Underneath the window stood the Black Fish motor just about to start for provisions to Boston. Jessica tied up the box and wrote on the envelope Bridget Shaughn's name and the address of the hospital.

Bereft of her gift she re-read Herrick's letter. It touched her; she could not help it. This was the second thing Herrick had given her — a twenty-dollar bill, beautiful roses . . . and . . . She turned sick as she remembered those hot quick kisses.

She had passed the whole afternoon with Rafferty. It had been a great relief and refreshment. Fresh, breezy, kind, he had a store of wit and humor. They had laughed over their lunch at the country grocer's counter. She felt that he was giving this treat to her to make up for the indignity she had suffered at the hands of one of his patients. Not a word had been said of Herrick.

Toward the end of that week, in response to a telegram, Rafferty went to San Francisco. What the telegram's news was no one knew, but he said to the doctor he left in charge:

"You keep close track of this cage of monkeys, Dr. Parsons. I am going right out west and right back as fast as I can." Rafferty was locking up his desk and

safe. "Keep an eye to the girls, too," he laughed. "*You know what I mean.* These millionaires come up to get cured of everything but damn foolishness; but damn foolishness follows a man anyway to the end, I guess, even when he hasn't got any teeth left to crack a nut with."

Rafferty stood for a few minutes alone after the doctor had left, then he sat down at his desk and started to write:

"My dear Miss Tryst:

I am going off to San Francisco for a few days and before I go I wanted to say . . . what I didn't say the day we lunched over to Jenkins. . . ."

He had his glove in his left hand and sat patting the notepaper lightly, looking down at the pen-halting words. He mused, then folded the note and tore it into scraps and threw them into the waste-paper basket.

Lizzie came in when he rang.

"I want to give Miss Tryst some last orders; ask her to come up."

"Why, Jessica's got the afternoon off, Mr. Rafferty, and she's walking in the pine-woods."

He looked bitterly disappointed, consulted his watch. His car was waiting, and he followed Lizzie with his traps out of doors.

And Jessica had no idea that had he been able to find her he would have asked her to marry him.

* * *

Fred Herrick had never seen anything so attractive. Jessica, perched up there just where he had seen her

first, in white shoes, stockings, skirt, blouse and hat, all white, and around her the sunlight of an August day poured its gold, and over her the green umbrella of a chestnut tree spread its shade.

How strong she looked! How vigorous and fine!

This time Fred Herrick did not come stealthily like a thief, but frankly through the woods, looking for her.

"Hello, Miss Tryst!" He stood at the bottom of the little hill.

Jessica shut her book, not in the least disturbed, although there was no runner sprinting on the running-track ready to come if she should call. That there was no need for uneasiness she knew by Herrick's clear eyes.

"Can I come up, Miss Tryst?"

He did not wait and was by her side in two bounds.

"May I sit down a few minutes?" His tone was quiet and dignified.

"Why, yes, if you like."

Herrick threw himself down and as he did so Jessica thought with a sharp twinge of O'More. It was nearly two years ago now. The memory stung; she shook her dark head as though to forget that pain.

"What are you reading?"

"You'll think I'm an awful prig — Plato."

Herrick put out his hand and took the book. He laughed.

"Going through college?"

"No."

"Care a lot for reading and all that sort of stuff?"

She laughed. "All that sort of stuff! . . . What do *you* care for?"

Herrick made himself comfortable. "Well, all sports

. . . cross-country riding. . . . I guess I like Wall Street about as well as anything."

"Money must be very interesting," said poor Jessica. Herrick did not know how much it was part of her dreams!

"The most fascinating thing in the world. My dad made every cent he's got! Started out with fifty cents in his pocket! Suppose you won't believe me, but I've done the same thing."

"You don't look as though you ever had had as *little* as fifty cents in your pocket."

She sat about tranquilly, her face toward him. She was the handsomest thing he had ever seen, more than pretty. Herrick was thinking of all the good-looking girls he knew, dressed like fairies, dressed like princesses — not one could touch her. A man would be proud to have her alongside of him in his motor-car, proud to take her into Sherry's or Delmonico's, proud to be seen with her anywhere. She was a wonder. How had she ever come here?

She drew a long sigh and looked away down into the shady corridors of the beautiful woods.

"Get my flowers?" Herrick's voice was soft.

"Yes, but I can't have things like that here. . . ."

Jessica said "things like that" as though she were in the habit of receiving boxes and boxes of flowers!

"I sent them over to my old nurse."

Herrick took courage, realizing that there was no one on the running-track and that Rafferty was in San Francisco.

"Get my note?"

"Yes."

He leaned just a bit more near to her. "You have forgiven me?"

Jessica picked up her book. "It's against the rules for a girl to talk to the patients. Please go back to the Cure."

He rose immediately. "Are you going to send me away like this?"

"Yes."

"It's pretty hard."

"Oh, I don't think so," said Jessica easily.

"Well," said Herrick, "you see what a good little boy I am going to be, Miss Tryst. I will walk right in front of you back to school."

In another second he was down the embankment and was lifting his hat to her as though she was the smartest lady he knew. He smiled and nodded and turned his broad back and walked briskly over the pine-needled ground toward the establishment where he was treated for broken-down nerves and the drinking habit. Jessica watched him. Then she got up lightly and with Plato under her arm, started back to the laundry.

CHAPTER VIII

"Mr. Herrick, it is a delicate matter. I don't relish speaking of it."

"Then don't."

Fred Herrick was sitting nonchalantly on the arm of one of Rafferty's big arm chairs in the guest parlor and Dr. Parsons had Rafferty's place by the desk.

The prize-fighter was still in the west. His big fists and hypnotic power of suggestion were not to be feared just now in the consulting room. Dr. Parsons, who would not have made himself famous in any line, was, however, a good second to the Sanatorium chief.

"I must speak of it. Before he left, Mr. Rafferty. . . ."

Herrick shrugged. "Rafferty is a big brute."

Herrick had reason to think so, but Dr. Parsons knew nothing of the thrashing in the woods — or of the incident, for that matter.

"Mr. Rafferty's brutality is not in the question," said the doctor. "You are making Miss Tryst conspicuous."

"She *is* conspicuous, I grant that," said Herrick warmly. "Miss Tryst is out of place here. If I don't talk to her some one else will."

"I should prevent them," said Parsons solemnly. "You must stop paying her any attention."

"What am I doing that displeases you, Dr. Parsons?"

"You took her to church on Sunday. . . ."

"Awful crime, isn't it?" Herrick laughed easily, swung his foot and lit a cigarette.

" . . . Her companions are beginning to talk about it."

"Stuff!" said Herrick.

Dr. Parsons did not frighten him in the least. Herrick said shortly:

"Look here, you're a good deal more scientific than the big bully that runs this place. Let me tell you, Dr. Parsons, that I wouldn't stay on if Rafferty were home. Put it in your future notes on nerve cures, that if I haven't drunk for a fortnight, and if my nerves have quieted down — in short, if I am a normal man. . . ." (Herrick was normal and a different proposition to the flabby-cheeked, nervous chap whose hand had shaken like a leaf when he had held it out to Rafferty a month before). " . . . Why, it is because I have had a normal companionship with a fine girl, the human touch. All this dope, this rot about physical exercise, doesn't cut a pound of ice alongside of what it means to have somebody talk to you and entertain you."

Parsons looked at him keenly.

"Mr. Herrick, you think you can go about buying *human souls* as well as yachts and champagne."

Dr. Parsons was getting on Herrick's nerves.

"Well, I've always paid for what I want, and I have not asked anything of Miss Tryst that. . . ."

Dr. Parsons interrupted him. "That chocolates and theatre tickets won't pay for?"

The doctor looked down at the little scrap of paper he was folding small, then turned about sharply on Herrick, who sat smoking and swinging his foot.

"If you ask the girl to go off with you again, I shall consider your room free to let to another patient, and . . ." he was about to say "dismiss Miss Tryst from the Sanatorium," but he did not want to fling Jessica into the man's arms.

"All right," said Herrick, blowing rings of smoke. "This place is so stuffed with rules and regulations that it is enough to cramp a man's chest." He rose, shaking his legs.

"It has cured you of drinking, at all events."

"Piffle! Miss Tryst has done me all the good there was to be done here to me."

As the patient walked toward the door leisurely, Dr. Parsons sprang from his chair, walked over and laid his hand on the door now half-opened, blinking at Herrick through his thick glasses, and said:

"If that's so, be man enough to be grateful to a poor girl working for her living and *leave her alone.*"

CHAPTER IX

Herrick got a fishing kit and went two miles up Black Fish to throw out his line and come as near to thinking as he ever did. Parsons had not stirred his conscience. He had always done exactly what he wanted. Weak in the matter of morals, he was not weak in his desires — rather the strong son, in many ways, of a strong father. He had taken Jessica Tryst to church and actually felt something of a religious sensation by her side; the smell of the country church, the fluttering hymn books, the quiet and drone, brought memories of his boyhood and his mother and the western town where they had lived before Dad had become so infernally rich.

Since Rafferty had gone west he had taken her several times to the theatre and never enjoyed anything so much in the way of a pleasure as to sit beside this handsome girl, watching the romance of the stage, hearing her laugh, seeing her pleasure, so much pleasure bought with so small an expenditure.

For the last years he had been a plunger in Wall Street, and the excitement had torn his nerves to shreds. The women he had thought of marrying in New York were girls of beauty and position, for he was ambitious socially and wanted to be in the "smart set." Herrick was bitterly conscious of his birth and breeding; his birth galled him down to the quick. The "smart set" in New York is not made up of aristocrats by a long shot, and Herrick was abnormally sensitive.

He was not ashamed that he had loved his mother and no memory in a long time had come to him half so gently as the memories that awakened in the little country church by Jessica's side. He was a drunkard, but he possessed what he had been able to get out of Cambridge. He could spell; his father could not. He could talk English; his father could not. He was more civilized than the man who had made the first millions.

The little ripples of the tide carried his line down the river. He watched the hook sink into the clear stream. Then came a delicious pull and twist; he played his line and, watching the flexible rod bend and bend, stood back to land his fish.

Now here at Black Fish, where he had come to get fit, he had fallen in love for the first time. He was desperately in love with the girl who had served him at table and who had been transferred to the laundry in order to get her out of his way, and for whom he had received a sound thrashing. Since that brutal moment in the woods he had hardly touched her hand. He thought that she was the handsomest woman he had ever seen; and it was a soothing comfort to him, a peaceful joy, to feel that she came of the class from which his people came, that she could not be superior to him, that she would not have any right to give herself airs with him. She was a waitress in his Cure and his mother had been a cook. Herrick did not know anything about Jessica; he only knew that he wanted her for his own with all his might. He could not sleep for thinking of her now. When he heard her voice, he grew cold; he could not see her pass across the corridor without wanting to follow her.

He fished for the rest of the afternoon, put away his catch in his basket, wound up his line and with rod and basket on his shoulder, came back to the house an hour or two before supper.

He was always looking for Jessica Tryst. He went up to his room, bored and melancholy, thinking of the lecture Dr. Parsons had given him, laughing at it, wondering how he could outwit the doctor, determined to do something rash and wild, utterly determined not to keep away from the girl. He put on a blue serge suit and made himself smart and tidy, thinking to lounge about on the piazza a bit before supper, took down his hat and sauntered out to the front of the big white building.

It was a dull time at Black Fish. There were only a few patients, one or two besides himself, for it was the off-season; men with bad nerves and habits were on their yachts and hovering around other water-courses, and Herrick only lingered on because of Jessica Tryst. He walked down the steps and stood idly, his hands in his pockets, looking about, when he saw her come hurrying out of the front door, her hat and gloves on, her coat over her arm. He had never seen her dressed like this. She was pale; she had been weeping, and it flashed over him that Dr. Parsons had dismissed her. She was alone. Herrick went up to her as quickly as he could:

"For God's sake, what's the matter, Miss Tryst?"

Jessica drew in a sobbing breath and looked at him behind her tears.

"For God's sake, what's the matter, Miss Tryst?"

"My old nurse is dying in Boston — I've had a 'phone." He saw her hands clasped convulsively. "There is no

train now, but I am going to start *to walk*. I've got to get to Boston."

In another moment he had made her sit down on the porch steps.

"Sit there till I come back."

By a curious trick of fate no one was about and Herrick ran like a boy to the garage. There stood Rafferty's big white car, but the negro chauffeur was off for the afternoon. A boy lolled about. Herrick knew all about cars and the machine was ready to roll out, in perfect order. In the next few minutes he had driven it up before the Sanatorium, the boy by his side. Jessica was over by the wheel before he had time to bid her to come.

"Coat warm enough, Miss Tryst?"

"Oh, yes, yes."

"See here, better run up and get your little bag and put some things in it — you may have to stay."

"Oh, I don't want to wait."

"Go on. I'll get you there before you know we are moving. Better get your things."

"But if Dr. Parsons. . . ."

"I'll fix *him* — you go along."

Jessica rushed indoors.

"Now," said Herrick to the boy, "you go up to my room, No. 17, and bring me down my motor-coat and cap — you will find them hanging on the peg; and my suit case is under the bed. Throw in my brush and comb and my pajamas are under the pillow."

"Yep," said the little freckled boy.

"And if you bring down everything and don't forget a thing, I'll give you five dollars."

Herrick did not want to leave the car for a minute; he did not want any one to come and claim it or stop it. It was like an elopement. It *was* an elopement, it was a *runaway*. He patted the steering-wheel tenderly.

Before Jessica appeared, though she came on his heels, the freckled-faced boy leaped down the steps with Herrick's suit case in one hand, his cap in the other, and his overcoat over his arm. No one saw them go. All the staff, free at this hour, were pursuing the diverse ways that rest or pleasure led them. Dr. Parsons was writing with his secretary in the guest-parlor, making scientific notes on degenerates, and one of the degenerates and a wonderfully normal and remarkably good-looking girl, holding back her tears, excited and desperately troubled, were rolling out of the Sanatorium into the sandy road toward what Fate held.

CHAPTER X

Herrick hardly spoke to her on the ride. He was too desperately in love not to put every bit of him into the psychology of winning her. He wanted her for his own; he wanted nothing but this lovely, slender woman, in whose veins the fire of life seemed to run with passionate swing and pulse. Her mouth seemed formed to ask for kisses, to give them. What would it not be to have her take a man to her arms! He thought it; he wanted her, he wanted nothing else. Could money buy her? He would spend it. What would he have to do to get her? What could he offer a decent young woman?

Marriage!

Would he have to take her to the registrar's office?

Would he have to get a license and marry her in order to take her in his arms?

They ran out of Black Fish. They ran for ten miles through the church-like aisles of the pines.

"Luck getting the car, wasn't it?"

"Oh, *yes*."

"Good thing I know about cars."

"Yes."

"Funny little kid, that freckled boy back there. I had to take him along; didn't care to leave him behind. Better to gather up the people who may tell tales, you know."

"I shouldn't care; there is no reason why he should

not tell. 'I am going to. . . .' She bit her lips; she did not finish her sentence.

"Don't!" said Herrick in a low voice. "I just cannot bear to see you cry."

They were silent for a long time. She was thinking, thinking, of what this moment meant. One other had come to her and it had meant the ruin of her life, the going out, the setting forth on a long journey of her grandfather. Now it was to Bridget Shaughn she was called, brave Bridget Shaughn, who had walked the world around; her journey was done. This meant that Jessica would be all alone.

As the bright, white, fair road spread out before the motor under her eyes, so life seemed to spread out before her, and she could see her solitary figure walking penniless, walking it to the end. If she had not read so much, if all these early years had not been so beautiful, such a wonderfully-colored, brilliant curtain to hang between her eyes and life, she could have borne it better. If things had always been sordid and ugly and vulgar.

. . . But how full of tender beauty Fortune Bay seemed to her now! What a jewel the old Red House seemed, waiting there in the summer suns, waiting there with the autumn leaves piling on its doorsteps, waiting there in the snows and the rains of the winter! How she loved it! She could hear Bridget Shaughn singing, singing over her work, and the Irish songs that Jessica loved thrilled her ears, thrilled her heart as the motor flew and she realized that she would never hear them again.

"A little bit of Heaven. . . ."

And they call it Ireland. . . ."

How Bridget loved her country, and planned to go

back some day to the land she had left as a poor young girl!

Herrick was thinking of the nearness of this girl, whose dress was close to him, her figure concealed by her big coat.

"I didn't know you had an old nurse. Seen her lately?"

"She has been cook here for nearly a year."

"Broke down?"

"She wasn't used to such long hours and such hard work."

"Darned shame!"

His crude sympathy was sweet to her.

"She came to Black Fish just to be near me."

"Now," said Herrick, "cheer up, won't you? Perhaps it is not as bad as you think."

"It is not bad," said Jessica slowly, "it is good for her. I haven't anything to give her; there is nothing but hard work for both of us, and she was too old."

Her beautiful voice did not falter, but its sadness struck him.

"Oh, I say, don't! I just cannot *bear it*."

Until they had reached Boston neither spoke; each one returned to their own thoughts, one of them thinking of the past and her dreams, tarnished so soon, and the other absorbed in the passion of first real love.

CHAPTER XI

They showed her to the little room where Bridget Shaughn lay. Death is commanding; it asks for everything. They had conceded to the poor old woman a private room as an ante-chamber between this world and the next.

"Sing, dearie."

Jessica, her breast heaving, the tears gushing out of her eyes, stood by Bridget Shaughn's bed.

"Sing."

Of all things to ask her then!

"Oh, Bridget Shaughn, I can't. . . . I can't. . . ."

"Sing!"

Jessica leaned over so that the ears, fast deafening, should catch the notes.

"A little bit of Heaven fell from the sky one day . . .

"And they called it Ireland."

One of the fluttering, quick appearing and quick disappearing smiles that the dying wear, fluttered like a wing over the old face. Ireland, full of beauty! Emerald beauty, where all the hopes and charm of dreams lay, of youth lay! Her country, from which she had gone to put her hand into the hand of cruel toil. . . . !

"A little bit of heaven. . . ."

The old woman opened her eyes.

"Dearie . . . the gentleman . . . who gave you . . . the twenty dollar bill. . . ."

"Yes, Bridget Shaughn?"

"Not Rafferty . . . *him*."

"Never mind, dearest." Jessica bent close to her, kissed her forehead.

"Sing."

She stopped her sobs and began again:

"A little bit of Heaven. . . ."

And as she sang the old eyes closed to open again on more of Heaven than she had ever found on earth.

CHAPTER XII

Herrick helped her into the car with protecting tenderness. He had not moved from in front of the hospital since she had disappeared within its doors. He saw her waver on the steps as she came out.

He was at her side; he half lifted her into the car. Jessica did not know where he was taking her. She had a vague sense of being led in through a small door upstairs, into a private parlor of a big hotel. She gave up her coat; it was carried away with Herrick's things. He sat by her side on the sofa, took both her cold hands in his.

"Now we are going to have a little something to eat right here."

"I don't want anything."

"You have got to do what I say and mind me, and just let yourself be taken care of."

For some time she covered her face with both her hands. Sitting back on the sofa Herrick watched her silently, and he got up and left the room for a few moments, went out and gave his orders. When he came back she was taking her hat off and going to the window, looking out at the trolleys and the crowd. She was not weeping.

"Now," he said, as he came in, "I know what you have been through. I lost my mother a year ago. We've

all got to meet these things and I hope it's some good that you are not meeting this quite alone."

She turned her ashened face on him and Herrick was more than conscious of her good looks. She looked so beautiful to him as she stood there, her fine dark head held up.

"I can't thank you enough for getting me here *in time*."

"Thank me by eating your supper and trying to forget about everything."

The waiter came in and spread the cloth and brought the supper. Jessica let Herrick lead her to the table and sat where he bade her obediently. He arranged the food on the plate and had the good sense not to offer her wine.

At a nod from Herrick the waiter left them and Jessica drank her tea, but refused the food. And Herrick cut it up and put it on her plate and fixed it for her as a woman might have done.

In this game of love that he was playing he was at his best. Everything chivalrous in him, everything fine, seemed to wake, and take its proper stature. In her silent grief she was so appealing to him that he would have done anything in the world for her, and never for a moment let her feel his power. She forced herself to drink the tea and ate a little food, to please him.

"When you were in the hospital I went and had a good feed. Never mind me."

Finally she pushed away her plate, sprang up from the table and, unable to keep back her tears or to struggle with memories, anguish and sorrow, threw herself down in one of the big chairs and burst out bitterly crying.

To see her shaken like this, and the sound of her voice in tears, the pale hands pressing her tear-soaked handkerchief to her face, were too much for Fred Herrick. He could not bear it another moment. He drew his chair close up to her and leaned over, touching her hair, touching her shoulders gently.

"Please, please stop crying! Every tear you shed just breaks my heart! Listen — can't I be of any comfort, any good? . . . Listen . . . Jessica, I love you, you know that! I love you more than anything on earth."

Jessica dropped her hands. Her face was disfigured with weeping.

"*Him* that give you the twinty-dollar bill, dearie . . . *him*." She could hear the dear old voice.

Herrick was saying:

"Jessica, I want you more than anything in the world. . . . You are *all* I want."

Herrick heard her repeat now:

"You're sure you care? . . ."

And he caught her at her words and made as passionate a declaration as a man of his kind can make — trembling, earnest, sincere.

" . . . Why, one of your little fingers, darling, is worth more than all Wall Street and all the money I've got."

Money!

She owed twenty thousand dollars. She had nothing in the world!

Dr. Parsons had told her that afternoon, kindly and quietly, believing that he was doing his duty, that she must find another place. She had been discharged from Black Fish Sanatorium and it meant another sordid ending, and so on and so on. . . .

She could not see Herrick very distinctly; tears threatened to blind her now.

"It's only because you've been here that I have pulled straight; you can make anything you want of me. . . . I'll be all right . . . all right . . . if you will stand by me."

She murmured again trembling: "And you think you *do* care so much?"

He did not let her complete her sentence. He caught her in his arms and did not feel that she shuddered then. It was not the same embrace in the woods that had filled her with loathing, but, oh, it was far from being the marvellous spring-like kiss that had made O'More's memory so dear.

But Herrick rose to a splendid height for him. If any one had prophesied, after, say, one of his gay parties, when perhaps he had carried off a pretty actress to his rooms, that he could have attained to this height for the sake of a country waitress, he would have laughed. A fellow with a fortune of millions and social ambitions!

"You know what I mean, don't you, Jessica?"

She regarded him tearfully.

"I mean to marry you *now*."

Still she did not speak.

"I am going out to get a license. If we can be married tonight, it will be wonderful. If not, I am going to get you rooms here and come back tomorrow."

He held her hand, beginning to taste the madness and sweetness of her delicious flesh and to be entirely carried away by her charm. He heard her whisper:

"You'll be good to me, won't you? I am alone in the world, all alone."

Holding her off at arm's length — his possession now, his, for life and death, for good or ill, in his very hands, and yet, with a woman's extraordinary mystery and illusiveness, beyond him, way beyond him — he murmured:

“And you'll be good to *me*, little girl? You'll be good to me?”

Jessica said: “Yes.” And kissed him, and to her it was a sacred promise to keep to the end.

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

The man sitting in one of the ornate chairs in the big lobby of the Plaza Hotel was not idly watching the passing crowd; he was waiting in cruel suspense, to see his wife come in with a man whom he believed she loved. Fred Herrick was still madly in love with his wife after twelve years of marriage.

Nervously pulling one side of his short moustache, shaking his foot in his light cloth gaiter, troubled, and reproaching himself for spying on Jess, he waited.

The tide of life swept in and out before his eyes, from streets, motors, from far and wide — life, gay, careless, extravagant, self-indulgent, the cosmopolitan flood swept past. It surged as though to offer uniquely to this miserable man its spectacle, its cinematograph of humanity.

Too nervous to be quiescent, he lounged over to the news-stand, bought a copy of *Vogue*, suddenly remembering that some one had told him that his wife's picture was in this number. Flanking an illustration of an article on country homes was a photograph of a portrait of Mrs. Herrick. She stood by her horse's head in a pink coat. She was smiling at him mockingly — so Fred thought; he had always thought that her smile was mocking because he had never been able to pull up his wit to follow alongside of his wife's *esprit*. She wore a small shining hat; she carried a whip.

Even the photograph thrilled him, there on the page of the journal. Jessica's grey-blue eyes, level, handsome, challenged him from under black lashes, black brows. How many times had he seen her crumple up her gloves like that! The strong left hand, with his wedding ring upon it, was bare and the ring seemed to shine there, mocking him as her smile did. He often had the anguish of seeing her without her ring; it was a fad of hers to leave it off, one of her ways of "feeling herself free." But in the portrait the ring was there on her strong white hand — her hand which, in spite of the law of marriage, he had never felt was really his, any more than the woman herself was.

Fred liked Jess better in hunting things than in anything else. When she walked beside him with frank exposure of shoulders and neck in a ball-dress he wanted to strike any men who dared to look at her too long. He was terribly in love; he was desperately in love. *And he had never won her.* Each year she was growing more cruelly far away from him; she was growing finer, more clever, more worldly, more cold. Still, he had always thoroughly trusted her. He believed her to be too thoroughly a good sport to do a horrid thing of any kind, and he did not believe there was a streak of unfaithfulness in Jess; and although she had enjoyed life very fully she had kept men out hitherto. . . .

Fred looked up at the clock and realized that she would not be likely to come along for another half-hour. He would have stayed here all day, however, rather than miss seeing what he dreaded to see.

His mother had died the year in which he had gone to the Black Fish Cure for dissipated millionaires.

Herrick senior had adored his daughter-in-law. When, a year after their marriage, he died, there had been a codicil to his will giving Fred Herrick's wife a million dollars in her own right, and the freedom added to her superiority. By breeding and fineness, by nature and by education, by mind and temperament, she was cycles beyond her husband. But rancor in Herrick was drowned out by his passion for the woman; he adored her and he was so proud of her! There was nothing about her that did not please his senses.

He took her round the world, and every hour of the journey Herrick tried to win the woman and failed!

Tapping the magazine on the palm of his right hand, he said to himself, with an expression of utter misery on his face:

"I have failed everywhere with Jess!"

He believed that if he should see Jessica come in here with the man whom he knew to be crazy about her, he would not be master of himself; he would make a scene; he would better go.

How he had lived in dread of the moment when Jessica should see some one she *could* love! He had considered all men as rivals, but he knew that if she had been tempted she had certainly risen above temptation, and until this winter he had had no cause to fear.

He went over again to the news-stand, bought a carnation and put it in his buttonhole. He was always sending his wife beautiful flowers, but could he have done so today?

Fred went out little in the world. Every one bored him excepting Jess. He spent all of his time in Wall Street, but when the season was on he ran off down South to

shoot, and when he could induce Jess to go with him down to Georgia he was as close to bliss as he ever came to being.

His jealousy had been aroused lately by one special man, a man mentally fitted to charm a woman like Jess Herrick. The year before in Washington she had met Senator Atkinson and ever since Fred had singled him out for the object of a most insane and agonizing jealousy. Atkinson was one of the men of the moment; his name was on every one's lips. He was one of the most ardent advocates of war with Germany.

Fred had never succeeded in breaking his alcohol habit; he did not get drunk, but he was thoroughly alcoholized most of the time and never passed a day without taking too many stimulants. He was beginning now to rebel against his self-denial.

He pulled himself up out of the chair and went downstairs to the bar, intending only to take a pick-me-up, but he drank several cocktails before he wandered up again to his post of sentinel.

His sense of propriety seemed to have awakened with the stimulant. "I am a cad," he thought, "to come here to spy on Jess! If it amuses her to play around with that pedantic senator it is her own affair. I will cut way. I am a perfect rotter!"

Fairly steadily he crossed to the big doors, swinging in and out, pushed like water-wheels by the inflowing and the outflowing human tide. And there, part of the crowd, crossing the floor over by the news-stand, he saw his wife coming along.

Jess Herrick always came along like the breeze. Vital, unselfconscious, magnetic, brilliant with the joy and the

sense of living, she always seemed to shine like a star in a commonplace crowd wherever she chanced to be.

Jessica Herrick was not with Senator Atkinson.

Her husband saw it with a start and with an anguish of relief that was as keen as his fear had been.

She was with a woman no less good-looking than herself, but of another type. Her companion was dressed with individuality and she was alarmingly smart. Around her neck was a bow of tulle and above it her small face — lips brightly reddened and eyes slightly darkened — rose like a pearl. She wore a wonderful hat, classical, of no special fashion, a soft mantle of a neutral tint, and wrinkled gloves climbing up her arm.

The two women were having a perfect time together and Fred could have worshipped the stranger because she was not Atkinson.

His wife was more girlish. She had come in from the skating-rink; in short skirt, with her skates over her arm, cheeks and eyes brilliant, a small hat, against whose fur a spray of mistletoe lay like glass, Jess might have been a happy girl coming in from a winter's holiday to the old Red House.

But Fred instantly feared: "She has come from Atkinson; she has been with him."

Jessica came forward, her hand on her friend's arm. Fred wanted to escape; he was in no state to meet a stranger and would gladly have turned on his heel. The two coming toward him were the smartest women in sight.

"Fred, how do *you* happen to be here? Mrs. Langforde, I want to present my husband."

Herrick was touching the soft glove that wrinkled

up the lady's arm. He murmured something, conscious of Jessica's Irish eyes that he thought always looked at him reproachfully. He knew who Mrs. Langforde was; every one knew her. Hers was the one house in New York where every one wanted to go; hers was the nearest approach to a salon in all New York. To be asked to Mrs. Langforde's was the height of ambition of all people who were making their position in New York.

"Mr. Herrick, I am going to run off with your wife."

(That would be better than having Senator Atkinson run off with her!) "If you do," he said with some humor, "there won't be *anything* left for me! Jess runs off by herself all the rest of the time."

"She has promised to come down and make bandages — we are all making bandages, you know, Mr. Herrick! There is so much to bandage, God knows! Next week I am sending over five hundred boxes to Serbia and Mrs. Herrick is going to help me."

Mrs. Langforde looked at him kindly out of clear blue eyes in which there was no reproach. If she was going to run off with Jessica, he must make her an ally.

"I should not be much good at making bandages," he laughed. "Let me send you a check for Serbia. Jess will roll linen, but I can send you a check."

Something about this newcomer on the scene pleased Fred. Herrick was a true woman's man, liked women thoroughly. He loved their beauty. He had never been able to see any one before but Jess, but this was a fine true woman.

"It is fine of you," he said heartily, "to work like this for the war." He met her eyes frankly with his own clouded eyes. "I should like to go over and volunteer

myself, Mrs. Langforde — I am getting fed up with this waiting game."

Fred Herrick had been able to buy his wife nearly everything in the world, but he had never been able to buy her position in society. But Jess was making her own way unmistakably, and Herrick realized vaguely that he was now standing before the most coveted open door in New York. Nora Langforde was on the very top of the heap.

CHAPTER II

From her Fifth Avenue apartment No. 10, on the ninth floor, Jessica had a wide view, a limitless expanse of sky. Nothing, not even the mistakes of fate, could hide the Heavens. The apartment-house, a honeycomb of separate dwellings constructed purely for convenience, and in order that people of large incomes should have as small annoyances as possible, was an excrescence on the face of the city. If there is nothing more homelike than this on the Western Continent, the word "home" may as well be eliminated from the dictionary! Jessica thought of it as a cave-dwelling, as she crawled in daily and was lost with the other hundreds housed there. There were thirty stories, all alike, and it made her dizzy to think of the other lives and needs and intrigues under the roof of her home.

The marble entrance hall, when it had been designed by the architect, had suggested to him the Alhambra — which he had never seen. The lines of perfectly functioning lifts, with men in smart liveries before the clinking doors, the repeated spectacle of marble and stone and greenish wrought iron on every story, the sameness of it all formed to Jessica's beauty-loving mind an Ugly Thing, a desecration of the dream of Home.

Fred Herrick had taken the apartment for a five years' lease. It had been a birthday gift to his wife and he had brought her to it and watched her surprise. For

a long time, Jessica, standing before a window in the big room suggested to her by Herrick as a boudoir, looked out over the miles of park, the ribbon Fifth Avenue seemed, the struggling ants that the people were, moiling and toiling in the streets hundreds of feet beneath. Far away in the misty atmosphere the Avenue tapered into a point and for the first time suggested the mystery that is necessary to all beauty.

"Nothing the matter with that view, eh, Jess?"

Mrs. Herrick was one of the few women in New York who never went to teas. Every afternoon at five o'clock, with the regularity of clockwork, her motor drew up before her own door, leaving her to toil into the big anthill, and she would come in, cheeks flaming, alive and keen, longing as the door opened on her commonplace interior to find there some sudden surprise, some unexpected miracle that would transform her life.

Although the rooms were full of really beautiful things, they represented to Jessica only the traditions of other people; other people had made their romances and their tragedies with these eighteenth-century works of art as silent observers. She had only purchased them, not inherited these things, and Jessica never felt that she had a right to their possession. Her apartment was considered the perfection of taste, and its interior had been photographed many times for the leading magazines, but no place in her mind had the beauty of the low raftered room where, elbows on knees, chin in hand, she had used to sit before the logs cut down by Grandy's woodmen.

They had not been married a week before every shred of romance regarding married life had been torn away.

The fact that she was so young only made things more cruel for her, because, as she said to herself: "I have so long to live! I am young and healthy — lots of people live to eighty years of age — why should not I?"

Boston! How she hated the place! She could never see it again without a shuddering horror; she could never drive by the Copley without a thrill of painful remembrance, because in those first weeks she had thought to kill herself; but as she turned over in her mind the different ways of committing suicide, she discovered that she was a healthy young animal afraid of death, more afraid of it even than she was of life. . . . And life was determined to have her, make its great beautiful demands upon her — beautiful indeed, if she could fulfil them as she had been created to do.

One day whilst her husband was out of the hotel in the first fortnight of their mutual life, without even taking her dressing-case, she ran away, leaving him, as she intended, forever. But as she was hurrying through the train-gate in the Back Bay Station, Fate played her a curious trick. Her husband had been lunching with a business man from New York and had come to see him off on the special. As he turned from bidding his companion good-bye he was just in time to see among the people passing out through the gate his own wife. In another second his hand was on Jessica's shoulder and she stopped to look up, white as death herself, but into the face of a man who appeared to be stricken with a mortal disease. Without asking her any question he pulled his wife gently back through the crowd across the station to the sidewalk.

The husband and wife were in a taxi when Fred tapped

on the glass and the driver stopped his cab. Neither of them had spoken a word until now and putting both his hands over Jessica's, Fred said:

"Look here, Jess — you have a man's life and soul in your hands, that's all. I daresay life is not fair anyhow — each of us grabs and takes what he can get more or less. I grabbed and took you. There — don't draw back like that — don't look scared! I am not saying a word. I don't ask a single thing."

He opened the door of the taxi, stepped out on to the curb, stood for a moment trembling like a leaf, his hand on the cab door.

"I am going to walk back to the Copley — and you tell the man where you want him to go."

Fred Herrick slipped his hand inside his pocket, took out a roll of bills and laid them in her lap.

"I bet you went away without money! Now tell the driver where to go — to the station or to the hotel. It's up to you, Jess — do what you like, my dear."

Of course she had gone back to the hotel, but not at once. She had driven first around the city, and dragged herself in at eight o'clock, languid, beaten, to rooms ablaze with flowers. From the window where he had been waiting for her, Fred rushed over with a cry of gratitude. She was a true woman, however, with spirit which had not been quenched and pride not all dead.

"How did you know I should come back?" she said, looking at his extravagant decoration. "How were you *sure*?"

"If you had not come back, they could have put these round my body. . . . I mean it every word."

In listening to his protestation, to his gratitude, some peace came.

She was just eighteen years old.

She had cleared her indebtedness to Henshaw in the first week of her married life. Her pride in that hour and the joy of the freedom from debt she purchased by the sale of her body. Of her soul she had never given away a part and that was why Herrick suffered so keenly.

She had never taken her husband to Fortune Bay; she had gone back alone to make provisions for a caretaker to watch over the place, and under a group of trees, the beauty of which she knew by heart, she buried Bridget Shaughn.

* * *

To the servant who stooped to put a log on the fire Mrs. Herrick said:

"I am not at home to any one but Senator Atkinson."

The orchids which Atkinson had sent filled a vase of Chinese porcelain and a silver bowl on the table near Jessica. As she sat waiting for Atkinson, she looked down at her work, a scarf she was knitting for a soldier "somewhere in France."

"I am so alive," she thought, "and I have no way in which to express myself."

She rolled up the scarf, thrust the needles through the ball and dropped it into her work basket. She had heard Atkinson's voice in the hall. The next moment he came quickly into the room.

He held her hands between his before kissing them, searching her face, then lifted them to his lips, inhaling their perfume as though they had been flowers. Often he had kissed them like this, asking for her lips, which she had not given him.

When he had taken a chair close to her, he leaned

forward, tense and absorbed as though he had only just parted from her.

Atkinson absorbed her. It had flattered her to be the woman he chose to single out for his preference. She knew that he had a great power over people, that he was one of the forces of the times. She liked him thoroughly; she responded to him more than she had ever responded to any other man; she thought she loved him. He was a power behind other powers. His genius and talent were as subtle and as irresistible as some hidden force in nature, and it was not surprising that in coming into this woman's life, so long removed from any real interest, he should have swayed her, made her turn aside from everything else.

"In Washington they tell me that I speak fairly well, Jessica."

"Don't I know? I have listened to you from the gallery for five hours on end."

"Well," he said with a little laugh, "now I have only a wretched quarter of an hour and I want time more than ever in my life!" He leaned over and caught her hand.

"We must belong to one another."

All the color went out from her face as though his words struck it out, and his emotion communicated itself to her. Atkinson took her in his arms, kissing her many times, until she broke away from him, throwing herself back in the armchair, covering her face with her hands. She heard him say:

"I will work miracles with you by my side, Jessica, miracles!"

Then she turned and he saw that she was not won — indeed, she seemed miles away from him, and Atkinson

in a moment felt that no appeal to the senses alone would ever win this woman, who was more truly virginal than any woman he had ever seen.

"You must never come to me like this again, never, never touch me again!"

"What a horrible injustice to us both! What do you mean?"

"It would kill Fred."

Atkinson, irritated, angry with her and with himself, laughed.

"Herrick? Oh, Herrick would only take refuge in a highball or a cocktail! I have carved my way from a Texas farm to Washington, and I want you. I have always succeeded in getting what I wanted, and I shall win you, Jess."

There were voices in the hall. They both started to their feet. The footman drew the curtain and Nora Langforde came in eagerly, abruptly.

"How do you do, Senator Atkinson? I thought that you were standing by the nation down in Washington. What are you doing here? But since you are here, you will come to supper tonight won't you? Don't let me drive you away — I have only come to beg Mrs. Herrick to sit at my table tonight — it will be the first time she comes to me."

"I am sorry — I am going back to Washington. I was bidding Mrs. Herrick good-bye."

Jessica went with him as far as the door of the drawing-room and when she came back Mrs. Langforde, who was standing looking down at the fire, said without glancing up:

"How stupid of me to have come in like that! Atkinson will hate me for the rest of his life."

CHAPTER III

Senator Atkinson's visit had been long and Nora Langforde lingered afterwards an unconscionable time for a woman who is giving a large supper party at her own house; and Jessica, when at last she came into her boudoir, saw that she would have no time in which to think over Henry Atkinson's visit and all it meant for her. Her husband was at home. In a little half-hour the telephone would ring to announce the motor to take her down to Washington Square, and she stood before the fire watching the ashes sink and fall.

This was one of the many nights on which she was going out to dinner without her husband. She was often asked alone and Fred made no objections to her accepting these invitations. He knew quite well why he was not included. In the early days of their life in New York, when they had been asked out together, he had failed his wife many times, putting her in a most embarrassing position; and now the fact that one was never sure whether Fred Herrick would be "himself" at the last moment was not the only reason why Mrs. Herrick was asked without her husband. Jessica was "arriving," growing popular in New York, and her commonplace husband was being left out. But his wife's success was a satisfaction to him; he was proud that tonight Jess should be dining in one of the smartest houses of New York.

Jessica held her foot in its thin stocking and white

satin shoes and brilliant buckle before the warmth of the fire. This had been one of the vital days of her life; she had met Nora Langforde, the one person in New York whom she wanted to know. It had been an event, but the important fact was that between herself and Henry Atkinson a crisis had arisen.

In the mingled light and firelight, bewildered by the problems she must solve, fascinated by them and unwilling to renounce — healthful, beautiful, vivid, the best expression of a modern woman of the time, full of charm of sex and life — Jessica stood, waiting for a door hidden by Fate's curtain to open and let her pass through.

"Hello, Jess! I heard Louise go out, didn't I?"

Fred Herrick came across the room in his smoking jacket, his hands in his pockets, a cigar in his mouth. He was to eat a solitary dinner under the eyes of two men servants who, he was sure, considered themselves a vast deal better than their master. Herrick threw himself down in a chair opposite his wife.

"Gee whizz, Jess, never saw that dress! It's a wonder!"

"You have seen it many times — it's not new."

"Looks new. But each time you put on a dress you're different in it."

The man in the chair whose name she bore was afraid of her. Between them was a gulf that ever widens between two human beings when one is inferior, the other superior, when one has a high spiritual development and the other is embedded in the chains of material things and flesh. She had never spoken a disagreeable word to her husband, yet everything about her hurt him, seemed to grip into his heartstrings, crush them and pull them and twist them.

He moved restlessly as he met her clear eyes.

"Fred, why did you go to the Plaza this afternoon?"

Through his brain, dazed by habitual over-stimulation, the thought came that his wife was going to reproach him. It was a grave moment.

He took the cigar out of his mouth, put it on an ash-tray and linked his hands together round his knees.

"Why, Jessica, I dropped in to the Plaza on the way up from down-town."

"Fred!"

Herrick pulled himself together — it was serious.

"I never did, Jess — you're right — I never did."

"I saw you sitting in the chair before I came up with Mrs. Langforde. You were waiting to see with whom I was coming in."

She was apparently quite unmoved and there was about her the atmosphere of self-control which to a man in Herrick's state of shaken nerves is painful in the extreme. His wife seemed infinitely separated from him, almost lost to his vision, as she stood on the other side of the ever-widening sea between them.

As though he could not bear this distance he sprang up and came over to her.

"Jess, I feel a rotter, a cad! I beg your pardon! I'm most awfully sorry. I don't wonder you were angry!"

And God knows she had cause for anger!

He had given her ample reason for disgust and despair. But to Herrick, in their relationship there were worse states of feeling than anger. Her patient endurance, her uncomplaining facing of her unhappy marriage, her wounded pride, from which she strove to let him suffer

as little as was possible — he was no blind fool and he knew that this state was more dangerous a menace to him than her anger could ever be.

He was taller than Jessica, but he felt small and insignificant tonight.

"I hope you won't go on being angry, Jess! I am so sorry. . . ."

"Just think what a woman feels when her husband waits in a public place to spy on her. . . ."

"For God's sake don't go on!"

She turned away, looking down into the firelight which stole along the skirt of her dress, along the white shoes and stockings to her slender waist, and shone brightly on the big jewel at her corsage. She was hung in jewels; he had given her every beautiful thing he could buy.

"Jess!" he murmured under his breath.

She did not answer; she remained thoughtful, sadder, and cruelly removed from him.

Herrick bit his trembling lip.

"If you could only *try*, Jess. . . ." He had said it a thousand times, humbly, beseechingly. "If only you could try, Jessica! Why you *know*, dear!"

"Fred, how can I? You've asked me this so many times!"

"There is not any answer to it. Jess, God knows you are perfect! You're wonderful — there isn't anybody like you in the whole world!"

"Don't say such things."

Herrick was turning in his mind whether he could kneel down at her feet and pick up the hem of her dress and kiss it. He knew how theatrical and ridiculous it

would make him and he contented himself with looking at her.

"I'd go through *hell* for you, Jess — you know that."

"I'm afraid I do make you go through it, as it is, Fred."

"I'd rather go through it hotter than it is, and have you under my roof."

"I wonder why? Oh, you don't know *how* I wonder why, Fred!"

He threw back his head and laughed.

"You ask any man in the world if he would not rather know where the woman he is crazy about *is*! Why, it's that awful dread that you are going to get away from me, that I shall come back some day and you won't be there, that some man has got what I never have had — Jess, that drives me *mad*!"

"You ought not to think those things."

"I know the danger. Today I was here when Atkinson's flowers came. . . ." He looked around. There they were, masses of orchids, filling every vase. "I knew you were going to tea at the Plaza."

He saw her withdraw.

"You *asked* my maid."

"I heard her telling one of your friends over the telephone, and then some devil got hold of me and I made up my mind I just had to see, Jess — I had to see!"

The telephone on the writing table rang.

"It's the motor. I shall have to go — I am already fifteen minutes late, Fred."

She moved over to where her cloak lay on the chair with her gloves. Herrick picked it up, held it for her, and she shrank at the touch of his hands under the velvet.

He walked slowly behind her as she crossed the room to the door, then he put his hand over the handle. He tried to smile as he looked up at this beautiful woman, going out into the New York world bearing his name, and so little his.

"Have you forgiven me?"

"Of course. You won't do anything like that again, will you, Fred?"

"Before God, I never will, old girl."

He put out his hand and she gave him hers.

She saw the mute appeal in his face. The vulgarity of his breeding seemed accentuated tonight; his life of dissipation scarred him more deeply every day. But he worshipped her and the patient doglike affection that he brought and laid at her feet never ceased to touch her. When she should return tonight, late, he would be sleeping a heavy sleep. As he lifted the hand Jessica had given him to his lips, the humility on his face touched her profoundly. She bent and kissed him on the forehead.

CHAPTER IV

Sitting back in her motor, relaxed and thankful to be out of the house and for a few moments alone, Jessica, for the first time since Atkinson had left her, had a chance to think about him. Her car made its way down the Avenue, slipping into the shining line of motors carrying the diners-out, the pleasure-seekers to their destinations.

She thought to herself: "Things are losing their proportions and their contours. I have been staring at everything too hard and too long. I don't know what I am going to do."

If she left Fred, he would certainly kill himself. He had told her so many times; she had never known him to tell an untruth.

There was nothing in common any more between the woman she was today and the girl who had stood at Grandy's side in the dear old room. But her interest in Atkinson was humanizing her. She had thought often lately of Brian O'More and his first kiss.

As she drove down to Nora's in her motor Jessica's cheeks burned as she remembered Henry Atkinson's caresses.

Her motor turned into Washington Square and stopped before a fine old house of rose-pink brick with light stone pillars. Two lamps shone on either side of the entrance, and, as Jessica went into the hall, she felt the individu-

ality of this house. As she crossed this threshold on this bitter January evening, the door softly shutting on wind, snow and cold, for the first time since she had left Fortune Bay Jessica had the sensation of coming into a home.

She went into a long wide room, warm and fragrant. Some one murmured "Mrs. Herrick" as she glanced about for her hostess.

Over by the wood fire, one foot held out to the blaze, Mrs. Langforde stood between two men. The room now broke into sound; the little groups began to take up their topics of conversation.

"I am glad to see you in my house at last, Mrs. Herrick, I am so glad."

Jessica felt her hands between the strong flexible hands of her hostess.

"Captain Urquhart, Mr. Muldoon — both compatriots of yours, Mrs. Herrick. You go into dinner with Mr. Muldoon. I said to Mrs. Herrick today that you must be cousins — ~~she is~~ Irish, way back. If she has a bit of the Old Country in her she is a patriot. Mr. Muldoon is a great patriot, Mrs. Herrick."

Mrs. Langforde drifted away with Captain Urquhart — an English officer, cold, steel-like. He looked not like a tin soldier, but like a steel soldier cut out of a bit of burnished metal.

"What a fine room, Mr. Muldoon!"

"It is," said the Irishman, "and full of fine things. Mrs. Langforde was telling me that I was to take in to dinner the charmingest woman in New York. I thought she meant herself when she said it, and I told her so, but I see now that she was not generous; she was truthful."

"It is the first time I have come down to Washington Square."

"It is the first time I have been inside any door in your city," he said. "I have only arrived this afternoon from Ireland, from the other side."

"Oh," said Jessica, "that 'other side,' so full of anguish, Mr. Muldoon!"

They were walking slowly towards the dining-room, through the music-room.

"You heard the singing, Mrs. Herrick?"

"Yes, I came in with the song."

"You should do," said the Irishman, laughing softly, "it is the way you should come — Mrs. Langforde knew!" And before she could think twice of his personality, he continued: "They say this is the most wonderful house in New York — every one comes here who gives pleasure and knows how to take it."

The guests had begun to wander in informally to the long dining-room, where the panels on the walls had been painted in the early nineteenth century by the hand of a real artist.

"We sit where we like," said Mr. Muldoon.

"No," said Mrs. Langforde, "Mrs. Herrick doesn't — she sits here. I want to choose who shall sit by her tonight. You, Mr. Muldoon. . . ."

"Indeed," said the Irishman, "you would have to declare war to prevent it."

A little round table, brilliant with flowers, a bit drawn back from another open fire, was filled in a few moments by Jessica, Muldoon, Nora Langforde, Captain Urquhart; the chair on Jessica's right was empty.

The evening passed for her like a charm. Afterwards

she remembered how this night shone out for her as something distinct, brilliant, totally different to anything she had ever tasted before in the shape of social life. How dull other functions seemed compared with this! Rounds of bridge parties, dinners, interrupted during their courses by tangoes; dinners at which she found herself impinged between two people, neither of whom as a rule she cared to see again, whose interest in herself she felt to be, at most, tepid. For years and years she had only to shut her eyes to recall Mrs. Langforde's low dining-room, the walls painted in soft colors by a hand that loved its work; masses of flowers in beautiful vases, an open fire in the old colonial fireplace, little tables scattered here and there, a few people around each, interesting people who had drifted to Nora's house from all points of the globe to be gathered together at this thrilling moment in the world's history, by this woman's magnetic charm.

Nora, herself, her arms lightly posed on the table, her chin resting on one hand, was like some rare bird, only captive for a little while in this Western city. She always wore a tulle bow under her chin and tonight its color was of pale orchid and above its fantastic flare rose Nora's lovely face, where the lips, a bit too scarlet for life, were not too bright for beauty, and her greenish-blue eyes, the masses of her tawny hair, made her different to any woman in the country.

The people were glad to be here. They wanted to meet each other, they had subjects to discuss, and the moment itself was full of inspiration. There were men from Washington, there was a man who had opened up Panama and who, just from his own country, was

drawing Americans to sympathize with the fighters on the Alpine Peaks. There were others.

Things went swiftly under the impulse and the mental stimulus of this brilliant Irish woman, and Jessica, before she knew it, had become part of Nora's circle.

The chair at Jessica's right had remained vacant.

"I've been keeping that place for a man who begged for it! He should be here directly. He is sailing back home tonight, but this afternoon we were speaking of you, Mrs. Herrick, and I used your first name and my friend said to me: 'If her name is Jessica, I must take her in to dinner! I make a point of taking every Jessica I come across in to dinner. I am looking for a special one!' Of course I promised!"

A servant spoke to Mrs. Langforde, who rose, exclaiming:

"Oh, Captain O'More! Won't he come in?"

She hurried out of the dining-room and Jessica saw her greet an officer in khaki.

A sharp thrill ran through her and she grew cold. This man's name was O'More, and as the other had sailed away fifteen years ago, he too was sailing back to England tonight! And he had asked to sit next to her because her name was Jessica.

Muldoon was continuing: "There is nothing more emphatic, nothing more vigorous than an island people, Mrs. Herrick. Look at England — the power of her, the grip of her! She does not seem to realize that the pigmy she held once in the fist is forcing all her fingers open!"

Jessica rose and followed the others through the conservatory, Muldoon walking beside her, talking about Ireland. But she had ceased to hear him. Nora was

standing with the soldier. He was blonde and fine, and as Jessica came up a light broke over his face. The years were brushed away with the sight of her. He felt the summer wind from the pine forests blowing; he heard the tap-tapping feet on the board of the rustic dancing stand.

He held out his hand, exclaiming: "Jessica Tryst!"

And then Mrs. Langforde appropriated him. How could she know that this was the picking-up of an old romance? And others drifted over to bid him good-bye; he was surrounded. There was just time to follow into the hall with the others and Jessica did so.

The front door opened and the cold winter air rushed in upon them as they crowded about the departing guest. Brian O'More ran down a little path cut between snow-drifts with the light from the open door behind him and the people crowding round, bidding him good-bye and calling out good cheer to the Irish soldier. He got into the motor and once again Jessica saw him disappear.

CHAPTER V

The following day, before going down to Washington Square, she glanced at the list in the paper of people sailing for Europe and read Captain O'More's name.

Her husband, in his riding clothes, came in as she was reading the *Tribune*. Jessica did not like to be asked where she was going, but she never went out that he did not long to know what her engagements were and whom she went to meet. He knew that her contact with other people took her away from him and was a direct menace to his slight possession of her.

The late hours of the night before had not told upon her in the least. She was keenly alive, and looked up to her husband smiling, answering the question he had not put to her in words.

"Fred, I am going down town to Mrs. Langforde's to roll bandages."

"That's a smart house, all right."

"Mrs. Langforde is very charming."

"Good time last night?"

"Delightful."

"All 'high-brows' there, I guess?"

"There were some very interesting people."

"Lots of women who would give their bank balance to get there, you know." Herrick spoke with pride.

"Any one worth mentioning?"

"McCormack — other professionals too — some of

the Irish Commission — no one you know, I think.”

Herrick said bitterly: “Of course not! *I* should have been a fish out of water! Talent, pedigree, tradition — Middle West not expected to roll in *there*. Hey, Jess?”

“You were asked, you know, Fred.”

As they silently went down together in the lift she said: “Too bad you could not have walked down town with me, but you’re riding.”

Herrick flushed with pleasure. “I’ll run up and change if you’ll wait.”

“No,” she said, “it will make me late. We can go along together as far as Fifty-ninth.”

He was proud to walk beside her, proud that his footsteps should fall alongside with those of this handsome woman keeping step with him, in her short skirt and furs, her dark head held high. And this little bit of companionship with his wife made his poor heart lighter for the whole day.

Mrs. Langforde’s rooms were transformed. Everything had been moved to make place for the long tables on which were piles of gauze and linen, bandages in the making, dressings methodically arranged here and there. In a row under the mantel was a line of Red Cross cases, and women were bending, filling and placing, arranging and packing down the thousands of bandages made here in Nora Langforde’s drawing-rooms.

Jessica had never seen anything like this since war had been declared in Europe. On the piano, on the tables, the great vases still filled with flowers were there from the night before. Bandage rollers were fastened tightly to the table edges and here and there rolling at them, spirited, motionless, talking across the table, were

women whose names figured in the society column of the smartest events, women whom Jessica knew by name, and a few of them were her friends.

Mrs. Langforde was measuring muslin with a yard measure.

"Come over here by my table, will you, Mrs. Herrick, and help me to tear this muslin?"

Mrs. Langforde was a famous Irish beauty; she had had her worldly life and her social record in the other hemisphere. Everywhere she went, she was a *persona grata* known and beloved. Today her lips were not so red as usual; she was tired from her late and long hours the night before, and under her eyes were dark rings, none the less becoming. She did not wear her tulle bow on this afternoon and her long, slender neck, unconfined, rose dazzling white from the collar of her dark grey blouse.

Jessica watched her capable clever hands, hands which could paint and play with clay, which could drive and fence as well as they performed this merciful task. Between them lay a mountain of torn strips of linen.

The room became sacred to Jessica. Her imagination was strong. The walls slipped away; the scene passed from before her eyes and she could fancy these bandages under other skilful hands, fast transforming themselves from white to a cruel color.

And then slipped to Jessica into the room the memory of the night before and the charm of McCormack's music hung on the air.

"I can't thank you enough for last evening."

"Was it nice? You liked it? *That* is the best of thanks, you know!"

Mrs. Langforde looked absently around the great room where every one was at work.

"What capable hands you have, Mrs. Herrick!"

Of a sudden Jess could see herself up to her elbows in soapsuds, washing dishes at Rafferty's. She smiled and looked up frankly at Mrs. Langforde.

"I have done a lot of hard work."

"I like people who work," said the woman who had made herself a salon in New York. "Only people who *do* things interest me, really, and I do not need to tell you," she said, lowering her voice, "that you do interest me, Mrs. Herrick, awfully. These people will all be gone in a minute. Stay to luncheon with us, will you?"

Jessica wanted to stay and hear of Brian. She wanted to ask a dozen questions about O'More.

When the others went Mrs. Langforde walked slowly out of the bandage room and before she had time to speak, Jess said:

"I must go home — it is my husband's day for lunching home."

Every Saturday, year in and year out, she lunched with Fred. She knew what that little intimate luncheon meant for him and she cared that it should give him so much pleasure. But here she recognized today a real temptation. She wanted to stay here. By another door into the dining room had come three children, pell-mell, three dream children, as though cut out of old-fashioned books, with hair all full of light and loose around their faces, in little homely frocks, short above the knees. There were long expanses of bare legs and rumpled stockings where the socks had all twisted down around the slippers. She saw the rushing to the table, the bibs

tied around the necks, for they were quite small children. Mrs. Langforde and she walked together slowly in; then Jessica heard the chorus:

"No, no, Cissy — *I* am to sit by mother darling today."

"No. . . it is *my* turn. . . ."

And before she knew it Mrs. Langforde was overrun by children; they were all around her; she was laughing and kissing and being eaten up alive. Over the head of one of the children she said to Jessica:

"You don't blame me for having them? You *will* stay with us? Kiddies, come and speak to Mrs. Herrick, ask her to stay."

Jessica touched the eager gracious little hands; she bent down and kissed the sweet, fresh faces, and then they were all back again on Mrs. Langforde:

"Oh, mother darling. . . ."

She had never heard anything that went through her so sharply, so piercingly.

She walked up town from Washington Square to the very top of the cold winter city, and she walked as though in a dream. Charm hung round the house she had left: love, children, charity. . . . The charm impregnated, took hold of her. It was the best of life. What did it come from? The hearth, the family . . . from love that conceived, went on, persisted, could not die. From love alone such an atmosphere existed. A woman's love and children were the pillars, the arc and foundation, the home itself.

She had not been able to ask about Brian. Other people had come in and she had slipped out, taking her furs and starting out into the cold air

In all these years of city life, she had not made one woman friend. She had been too unhappy. She had not wanted ever to discuss her husband; her own environment was too little; what she wanted and felt she expressed.

She went listlessly into the dining-room and paused before her own place. On this table set for two was everything that money and wealth could suggest — expensive glass and china — the roses in the great bowl alone cost twenty dollars. The two men in livery waited to serve herself and her husband.

But what a difference between this table and the simpler one down in Washington Square, where children's bibs had laid beside their silver mugs, and where one old servant in undress livery had stood by the side-table, piled with simple dishes!

She glanced at Fred's place.

"Where is Mr. Herrick? Will you tell him that luncheon is served?"

"Beg pardon, Madam, but Mr. Herrick is not very well this morning. He wished me to say that he was very sorry, but he would not be lunching."

Jessica did not flinch. She had heard that message before; she knew the formula; she understood it too well. She knew that she was not supposed to go into Fred's apartments, and if she did go, she knew that she would find him with the room darkened, thrown on his bed, a bottle of bromo-seltzer by his side. She knew. . . .

She wanted to leave the formal dining-room and escape to her own room and have something there on a tray, but she was too good a sport.

A man drew out a chair for the lady and then she sat down before the glittering table as she had sat countless times, to eat alone. But today around the board there seemed to gather shadows of what might have been — should have been — and when the servant passed her an entrée of *paté de foie gras* she could hardly see through her tears.

CHAPTER VI

That night when the curtain rang up upon the second act of "Butterfly," Jessica came in to Mrs. Langforde's box to find her already there. Atkinson came in between the second and third acts.

Jessica turned her face half to him and half to the house.

"We are living in tremendous times, Jessica! Only Washington realizes how tremendous! No man knows where he may be sent if the United States declares war."

"You would not be called?"

"I am barely forty. There are commissions for men of sixty."

"You are more useful in Washington."

"Or in Petrograd," answered Atkinson quietly.

Jessica felt a sudden tightening of her heart. This meant that she would lose him. She heard him say:

"I need your strength, your vision, your sweetness — my God, how much! Don't you know it, Jessica? You *must* know it!"

Atkinson did not go on. Jessica, free to listen to the music, was possessed by a sense of desolation. She leaned forward and tried to listen to the opera.

Suddenly she felt Atkinson crush her hand between his own and the pulsing sensation as his palm met hers found her heart.

**“I will be downstairs in my motor at half-past twelve.
I will take you out into the country; we can be together
the whole day.”**

CHAPTER VII

Herrick awoke, shamefaced, in the deepest gloom, in the most profound melancholy. His masseur came and rubbed him down. He took a strong pick-me-up, but his mouth felt like cotton-wool and his head rotten. When, bathed, shaved and dressed, he came out of his rooms at noon stealthily as a criminal, he slipped past the doors of Jessica's boudoir and bedroom.

The brilliant sunlight of a glorious winter morning flooded the library, filling the room with its cheer. He went over and stood before the mantel, his hands behind his back, trying to pull himself up into manhood, trying to whip up his spirits before he saw his wife. He could not remember ever having felt so utterly down and out. It made him sick to think of facing the men servants since he had gone to pieces the night before and his valet had put him to bed. Servants — bad enough to face! But to face his wife was far more serious.

He sighed, lit a cigarette, and threw it down half finished. He could not smoke.

This could not go on!

How many times he had said this, however — and it *had* gone on. His wife was slipping from him each day and . . . oh, God! how much further away every one of these weaknesses of his removed her!

On the table lay the Sunday papers and magazines. Herrick listlessly lifted up the top sheet, where news of

the war ran across the page, telling of battles won, battles lost; the fight down in Washington for the position that the United States must ultimately declare war; and politics; battle and death, stirring, thrilling. But he could not fasten his attention on the headlines. He vaguely wished that he were over there fighting at the battles. Jess would be proud of him then.

He opened the sheets of the sporting news and laid the paper down and glanced toward the door, thinking Jess would come in at any minute. After one of his lapses he always wondered how she would greet him.

"She's a wonder!" he murmured, half-aloud. "Jess is a wonder to me, anyhow!"

Nevertheless, today it seemed as though he could not face his wife. He started as the curtains were drawn, but it was only the footman bringing Herrick a card. Fred read it and repeated the name aloud with surprise:

"Joseph Rafferty! Is he outside?"

"Yes, sir."

"By the way, Rugby, will you tell Mrs. Herrick that.
. . ."

"Mrs. Herrick is not at home, sir."

The husband caught his breath with relief. Then he remembered that she never went out on Sunday mornings; very likely she did not want to meet him.

"Ask Mr. Rafferty to come in here."

Fifteen years had passed since Rafferty had given Herrick a proper hiding in Maine Woods. Herrick bore no malice and was glad to see any one who would help him in the first meeting with his wife.

"How do you do, Rafferty? This is fine, fine!"

"Hello, Mr. Herrick! It's great to see you again."

Fred's hand ached from the grasp of the big hand.

"Sit down, Rafferty. Have a cigar?"

Rafferty was sitting by the side of the table close to the mountain of newspapers. With a beaming smile he chose a cigar, carefully bit the tip off the end, lit it, twisted it around his mouth, and beamed up at the man who had once been his client.

"Once a month I let myself smoke a cigar, and this is on you today, Mr. Herrick, and it is all *right*, it is all *right*."

"You're looking fit, Rafferty — you haven't gone off a hair."

"Come," said the prize fighter, peacefully, "don't give me any of that, Mr. Herrick. No man can fight through life and keep his weight! I don't expect to — I'm fifteen years older. Let's look at you."

Fred's face was against the light; he was glad he was not too visible.

"I look as all New York men who live too well, Rafferty."

Rafferty looked at him piercingly and said slowly: "If any one had asked me though, who was the luckiest man in New York, I would have said you — and you ought to look it."

"That is what you think I am, is it?"

"Sure, you married the finest woman I ever came across."

"What have you been doing, Rafferty, these years?"

"Livin' out west on a lemon ranch."

"I heard you had given up the 'Cure.'"

"You bet! You wasn't any of you entertaining enough to keep me on the job."

Rafferty laughed.

"I came home and closed the shop . . . that year," he said with emphasis, "I married."

"Got a lot of kids, Rafferty?"

"Five," said the prize-fighter, proudly. "That's just about all that's worth while."

"We haven't any children."

"Too bad!" said the prize-fighter. "A shame! When everything else sickens you, you can turn around and look at your kids."

"Things cannot have gone badly for you, Rafferty. You look fit as a two-year-old."

The prize-fighter scrutinized his massive hands. "Well, everything went back on me for a few years. I was ill; then my wife was having a baby every year, and meanwhile I lost every darned cent of money I had put away."

"Too bad," murmured the millionaire, sympathetic at the money loss.

"No, it wasn't," said the other sharply. "It was the best thing that ever happened to me. I went back into the ring on the quiet, did a lot of training. Of course I didn't go into it so that you would hear of me — my wife would not let me."

"And it kept you fit."

"Sure. And I gave up the getting rich idea; I just contented myself with keeping us all together. . . ."

"And what about the girl you married? Wasn't she worth while?" He looked around the room. "Pretty handsome place you have got up here, Mr. Herrick."

"Like it?"

"It's great; it's my ideal."

"My wife's," said the husband. "She does everything just the way she wants, of course."

"Of course," said the prize-fighter, with emphasis. "And whereas I am darned glad to see you, Mr. Herrick, you understand I would be *mighty* proud if I could see your wife. I would like to see . . ." he hesitated, then ventured: "to see how she turned out."

"I'm awfully sorry, but Mrs. Herrick is not at home."

He saw the prize-fighter's face fall; he saw the distant disappointment.

"Gosh, I *am* sorry! I don't come east often. . . . :
Going back west tomorrow night. Lot of business downtown — I shan't be up this high again. . . ."

His tone was so hearty, his whole appearance so full of heart and soul and vigor; he was such a splendid, vital animal, that it gave Herrick a pang to feel his own body, shrunken, in its costly clothes, his own small soul, compared to this big out-of-door spirit, who had worked with other men's diseased minds and souls and who, out in the Far West, had struggled to build up his young family, to make his way again after one knock-out blow after another.

Rafferty enjoyed his cigar.

"Gee, it must feel fine to sit back here and look around on these things and know that you have made the money to buy 'em! She chose 'em, did she?" He stopped; perhaps he was not justified in making any personal remarks about the woman who had been his waitress and who had climbed so high! He laughed softly. "Ever think of that day in the woods? I certainly *did* give you a good little lay out!" Herrick laughed.

"You did indeed, Rafferty."

"Got any picture of her?"

"There is a painting in the next room of Mrs. Herrick. Come in and look at it."

They went slowly together through the big rooms, Joe Rafferty gazing like a tourist in a museum at the furnishing, the pictures, sweeping the room from one end to the other with appreciative eyes.

"Gee, but this is *some* house!"

He passed over the threshold into the drawing-room and silently, beside Jessica's husband, he looked up at the picture of Mrs. Herrick standing beside her hunter, her grey eyes on a level with his own. From under the black lashes and the black brows she seemed to smile at him as she had smiled at him that afternoon in Maine over the grocery store counter.

He sighed. That day Rafferty had been in bliss. He had seen his man and boy's vision come true; the pretty waitress had been the woman of his dreams. It had taken him months to recover from his shock when he had come back to Black Fish and found her gone.

"Look like she used to, Rafferty?"

At first the prize-fighter did not answer, then said slowly: "She's changed, of course, *some*."

Herrick did not notice how the color rose in Rafferty's cheeks. He repeated as they turned away together:

"You think Mrs. Herrick has changed?"

"You wouldn't expect a girl like Miss Jessica Tryst not to change," said the prize-fighter. "She's a riser."

He spoke more to himself than to the husband. He wanted to ask if he could not have a photograph of that picture. What would he not have given to have possessed one!

"I must be getting along. Going down on Long Island to buy some dogs. Got a big motor — goin' with a friend for the day, Mr. Herrick. Honest, you don't look well, not as I would like to see you."

"I haven't been fit, Rafferty — that's right."

"Better come west with me out on to my ranch and get some riding, Mr. Herrick."

"By God!" said the other man, "I would like to! If I *could*, I'd go with you tomorrow night."

"Say, fine! Come right along."

As he shook hands with Fred at the door he said:

"You'll have the laugh on me — I dare say you will laugh it out with *her* on me! But if you hadn't played that swift trick of yours up to Black Fish, when you run away with Miss Tryst, do you know what *I* was going to do when I came back from the West?"

"Kick me out, I guess — eh, Raff?"

"I was going to marry her myself." Rafferty grinned sheepishly. "*She'll* die laughin' when you tell her. . . . Say, *don't* tell her."

After Joe Rafferty had gone a mountain-breeze seemed to have blown through the room and left freshness behind it. Herrick began to walk to and fro nervously. The clock on the mantelpiece rang one; they lunched at half-past. He touched the bell.

"Mrs. Herrick in, Rugby?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Do you know where she has gone?"

"Yes, sir, she has gone down to lunch on Long Island."

"No special word for me?"

"No, Mr. Herrick."

He could not ask any further questions. He was

terribly troubled. He threw himself down in a big chair, tapping his fingers together. She was beginning to punish him; it did not appeal to her to sit tête-à-tête opposite to him today at a formal luncheon table. She was ashamed of him, disgusted, just one more time, one more time! Would she leave him? His throat grew dry; horror seized him at the very thought. He worshipped, adored her; he could not live without her presence in his life.

* * *

He wandered in to his lonely luncheon. There was a whiskey and soda at his place and he ordered it to be taken away, drank Perrier and ate almost nothing. The eyes of the two men fastened on him annoyed him; he could have kicked them out. Why in God's name didn't they put the things on the table and leave him? It was a hellish custom.

He wished that Rafferty had stayed to lunch with him. He wished he had gone down to Long Island with Rafferty to look at dogs; he might have found out where Jessica was.

"Tell Moxon to come 'round with the car at two o'clock," he ordered Rugby.

Then before Rugby had gone out to give the message to the garage, he called him back:

"Never mind — I shan't go out this afternoon. When Mrs. Herrick comes in, I am home, remember."

He threw his napkin down on the table, went back to his own apartments, and there before the fire in his dressing-room, deep in a leather chair, his hands clasped

across his waist, neither smoking nor tippling, Herrick meditated as never in his life. He faced the loss of his wife. He made up his mind to the very bottom of his soul to regenerate himself, to stop drinking. . . . He listened like a hunter for some sound that should tell him that Jessica had returned.

He rang the bell for his valet, and told him to pack things for West Virginia; to get tickets through the Metropolitan Club for the following day; they would take the early train next morning.

When the man had left to execute the orders, Herrick had a feeling of satisfaction, almost of happiness. This was his first step. Had not he seen her first up there, met her when he was trying to run straight, get cured? Now this would bring him luck. He would go down to West Virginia, live out of doors, shoot, walk, hunt and fish. He would not drink one drop, not one single drop, until he had himself in hand. He could not wait to tell Jessica this.

He tried to read and ended by losing himself somewhat in the pages of an excellent novel on married life. The man-and-woman problem held him; he saw himself in the man and Jess in the woman. But they parted for ever in the end and he threw the book across the room.

Unused to confinement in the house — and he would not leave it — he dozed for an hour or two, then dressed with scrupulous care for dinner.

Eight o'clock came and Jessica still had not returned. He interviewed Louise, confessed his anxiety; but Louise was callous, apparently indifferent, and perfectly uninformed; she was not worried about her mistress.

He ate another lonely meal and determined that if she

did not come by ten, he would call up every house on Long Island on her visiting list until he found out where she was, and was standing in the library between the fire and the door when he heard the soft sound of the bell and in the next few moments Jessica came.

"By Jove, Jess, you *have* given me a day!"

"Were you anxious?"

"Just about *crazy*! In five minutes more I would have called up all Long Island!"

In her tailor suit, her gloves snowy-white, white gaiters, a white fur around her neck and a small white hat with a single crimson rose — she wore no veil and her face was full of color and her eyes shone like stars — there was about her a radiance, a shine, a sparkle. She came slowly in without explanation or excuse. There was a brightness about her, and he had never seen her so dazzlingly good-looking.

She drew off her thick gloves and she sat down leisurely on the long footstool that ran before the fire. She held out her hands and the light shone through the fingers and on the big stone in the first finger-ring he had given her; dark and red as a drop of blood the ruby lay above her wedding-ring, which she was wearing today.

He came over and sat down on the other end of the little seat, not daring to sit near her. But she was not looking at him; she was looking at the fire. She had not come home to him! The brilliancy faded from her face; sharply she turned to speak, but Fred wanted to stop what he feared to hear her say, and he broke forth:

"Look here, Jess, I have made you a lot of promises. I've broken 'em all. I'm not going to make any more; I'm going to *do*. Old girl, I've been through hell here

today — just hell. Don't speak — you don't really know what I *can* do. I'm goin' to show you! Tomorrow I'm going down to Virginia to stay six weeks. I've told Peter to pack up everything; I'm goin' down there to live an outdoor life, to pull myself into shape. Today I've felt you were pretty well worn to the bone. I wouldn't blame you . . . if you left me. . . . All I've got to say is, if you do, or *when* you do, there is one more soul that goes to hell."

Twice she started to speak, but his words, tremulous and yet with a vibrant ring in them, kept her silent.

"Don't speak, Jess, don't, for God's sake! You couldn't say a thing I don't know already. I do not even ask your pardon. What is the use? You have been a brick to me and I haven't deserved it, but I am going to deserve it."

He suddenly seized her hands, drew them to him, kissed them, before she could withdraw, folded both his own tightly around his knees and she saw the flesh grow white around the nails.

"Why, I am just down at your feet," he whispered, "just down at your feet."

His excitement was so great, he was so tense, his desire for her good will was so overmastering, that he could not take in the woman herself, or her spiritual phase. She put her hands up to her eyes and his glance rested, fascinated, on her rings — chains that made her captive to him, emblems of the bond that he was so desperately afraid she was going to break.

Then he ventured to say: "Mrs. Langforde 'phoned up."

Jessica's hands dropped. "I went to see her. I was there to supper," she said. "I stayed late."

There was a pause.

"I am sorry you were so worried, Fred."

Herrick tried to laugh, to be natural. The relief in his mind was colossal. There was no mystery about her day, then! And she was back under his roof, she was his own!

Jessica rose.

"I am tired, Fred, awfully tired — I think I will go to my own room now." She held out her hand to him: "Good-night."

He would have drawn her to him, but she was gone, slipped again from his grasp, and the hand he touched was no longer there to charm him. She had gone out of the room, and he sat on the little tapestry-covered seat before the fire, alone.

CHAPTER VIII

At half-past seven the next morning Herrick came out in the hall, ready to go down in the lift to the motor and on to the Pennsylvania Station. His traps were there ready — his big valises, fishing-tackle, shooting things — and the footman was carrying them out into the lift.

He did not want to disturb his wife and he felt that he could not go away without saying good-bye to Jessica. She slept late. She would be sleeping; she would like not to be disturbed. He heard voices in her boudoir. She was speaking to Louise, and before he had a chance to go towards the rooms, Jessica came out in a short dress, a big loose serge coat with a small hat, with a scarf and those familiar soft gloves rumped in her hands.

“Jess! Looks as if you were going to take me down to the station!”

There was joy in his voice, on his face. What a brick she was, what a wonder! She followed him out to the lift. His eyes were fastened on her morning loveliness, her fresh skin, her clear eyes meeting his on a level almost, for she was tall, looking at him from under her dark brows and her dark lashes. He did not see the footman putting into the lift Jessica’s dressing-case, Jessica’s valise.

Louise came hurrying after them; Louise got into the lift.

“Why, Jessica . . . ?” he stammered.

And under her breath, as the door clicked and the man started down, she said:

“You didn’t think I was going to let you fight it out alone?”

CHAPTER IX

Jessica, full-length on the pine-covered earth, her hands clasped behind her back, looked at the sky visible over the pine-tops, and in khaki, russet boots and leggings, she might have been part of the tawny ground on which she lay. Every breath that came past her lips was full of spice, delightful and rich of forest aroma. She drew in long breaths of the sweetly-smelling air.

This hunting-box appealed to her, made her think of Fortune's Bay. The little southern shanty was her creation; the revolutionary house, low, white, with its green blinds, had been made over into a comfortable home.

Since she had come down a fortnight ago Fred and she had gone out with the guns nearly every day, and when Fred went alone she took a buckboard over to Ricksville, to the little country post-office, stopping a few moments and then driving slowly back again.

A sign in a building, the lower part of the disused bank given over to the Red Cross work, caught her attention every time she passed. There was a big Red Cross in the window, piles of dressings and appliances for making bandages, and the notice: "First-Aid Lessons and Lessons in Home Nursing." And she often thought of Brian, fighting.

Driving home over the sandy roads and with the reins twined around her arm, she read the letters from Henry

Atkinson which she had taken from the post-office, tore them into bits and scattered them along the sandy road.

Now, as she lay prone on the earth, she thought of Henry Atkinson and the Sunday he had come for her in his motor. They had started off from New York across the bridge into the country over the cold white roads in the big, softly-running car. Atkinson, clever in his conquest of this woman, talked to her absorbingly of his political interests at Washington, outlining for Jessica America's position regarding the Entente. He paid her the compliment of asking her opinions.

She listened, enchained and enchanted, followed with him the intricate, fascinating problems of a great country, listened to him balance the question at issue — the question of War with Germany.

She listened, her hand passive in his, the white fur thrown back from her open collar, revealing the warm ivory of her throat and neck and the beautifully-moulded lines of her chin and her cheek, in which the color rose and fell; her hair dark as a shadow under the fur of the hat.

Before the car ran into the little village of Water-Wheel, where he had already ordered by telephone a luncheon for them at the inn, he said:

"There will be war, Jessica."

"I hope so with all my heart."

"People will not believe you if you tell them so, but there *is* going to be war and our part of it will be colossal."

The motor drew up before the horse-block in front of the wayside inn, where from the porch an old-fashioned sign swung on its iron: "The Water Wheel." Henry Atkinson helped her out and they went in to a low-

ceilinged, stuffy parlor, which a red-hot stove warmed to suffocation.

They had run in late. The noon-day dinner was already served for them and Jessica sat happily before Atkinson at their rustic meal. He apologized for the coarse tablecloth, the heavy stone dishes, the roast chicken, the procession of green vegetables, the pies and cheese.

She was content, but avoided his eyes, which were growing ever more insistent. She had never enjoyed a meal so much in all her life.

The meal came all too quickly to an end and side by side, slowly, exhilarated by the air of the drive and thoroughly in harmony with each other, they wandered to the little parlor.

He held out her coat for her, wrapped her furs round her, and the next moment had taken her in his arms. He held her closely and it seemed to him that nothing could ever be so sweet again. Her furs, her hair, her skin itself, exhaled the most delicious perfume; it seemed to him as though his arms were full of flowers.

"Jessica, to think of having you forever like this!"

On the way home, as the dark red of the sunset crimsoned the barren, snowy fields, and up against the winter sky the leafless trees stood out like black seaweed in a crimson sea, he drew off her long crumple gloves, possessed himself of her hands, leaned toward her in the crimson light, falling on them both with a soft glory — and made his demand.

"Jessica, go home, and tell Herrick that you do not love him. . . . Will you tell him that?" He searched her face.

"How can I do that, Henry?"

"Do you love Herrick, Jessica?"

"No."

"Have you ever loved him?"

"Never."

"Oh, God, then what a sacrifice! What horror! And man's laws are made to render such things lawful! . . . Now listen, Jessica," he insisted in his fashion of claiming her attention, "*Listen.*"

A faint smile touched her lips.

"I have never listened perhaps in my life before."

"Tell Herrick a marriage such as yours has nothing sacred in it. Tell him that you are going to get a divorce."

"On what grounds?"

"You were married in Boston, weren't you? You can get a divorce for drunkenness."

"Poor Fred!"

From then until they had slipped on to the big bridge, with its rumbling traffic, with its cars and carts, its trains and its pedestrians, he pleaded with her. The evening fell darkly and the figures of the two people were indistinguishable in the car.

"Listen, Jessica . . . I am asking you for our future, for other lives, too, calling to come into existence! Think what a mother you will be, what noble children you will bear! Life counts, it persists, in spite of all else."

Atkinson, when he visualized this hour in his life, could not remember that Jessica answered, but she had grown as pale as the snows, and in the beauty of her eyes, as they met his from under the dark brows and dark lashes, he thought he saw his passion reflected.

As they drove into the city she became the conventional woman.

"Don't take me home — take me to Washington Square. I am going to see Nora Langforde."

* * *

And this was what she was living over now, moment by moment, lying there in the forest, with her face lifted to the January sky.

Before the chimney in her own house she had decided to tell Fred. But his pitiful need of her impressed her so that she could not think of herself. His despair was a stronger appeal than Atkinson's passion, stronger than any desire in herself for joy. Fred's ecstasy at her return, his first words, his haggard face, his poor, blurred eyes, his tremulous mouth and the shaking hands stretched out so touchingly toward her, were a gigantic appeal. His humility crushed her egotism and instead of beating faster for its own selfishness and passion, her heart had almost broken for Fred. . . .

She was thinking of all this, lying prone in the forest, the caressing pine-filled air blowing across her face.

Herrick's fortnight had been a complete success. He had put on ten pounds weight; he had not drunk a drop and he had been boyish in his delight over his victory. Jessica had been trained nurse, secretary, companion, everything except wife.

She picked up in her hand the dry, pink pine-needles and let them run like water through her fingers.

Just the same, she was sure she did not love Henry Atkinson enough to "crush up the world for his sake." If she married him and ever became mother of his children, she might then love him. . . . But she had not

been able to go madly on, rough-shod over honor and Fred's poor heart, and it must prove that she did not love Henry enough.

She went slowly out through the forest, through the little paths toward the house, which she could see on the other side of the deep red road, shining white against the live oaks.

CHAPTER X

Toward seven o'clock, still in her hunting-clothes, she was sitting on the steps of the house when Fred came swinging up with his dogs.

"Hello, old Jess!"

"What luck, Fred?"

"Fine day — the boys have carried around twenty-four quail."

His face was relaxed, his eyes shining. He threw himself down on the step beside her and with a great air of authority lightly picked up his wife's hand and held it, spreading out the fingers between his own.

"What have you been doing, dear?"

"Nothing especially . . . made some corn bread and took a long walk."

"Fine! I'd rather have your corn bread than Nellie's, any day. Do you know what it makes me think of?"

"Men usually say their wives' food makes them think favorably of their mothers' cooking."

He laughed. "Makes *me* think of Black Fish."

Jessica drew away her hand.

"Don't be proud, Jess. I love to think of the first time I saw you. . . . Gee, but you were some girl!"

"Fred. . . ."

"If you could have seen yourself walk in there in that print dress, holding up those dishes with a look on your face as much as to say: 'I spurn the whole earth!'"

These were his memories, the things he loved!

"I smell the corn bread, Jess, and bacon frying! It smells pretty good to me."

"Aren't you going to dress?"

"Yep," he said slowly, luxuriating in the fact that he was sitting beside her, home from the kill. The primitive man and the master awoke in him; clean, free from the indulgence of his habit, he revelled in the fact that this was the woman who belonged to *him*! He put his arm around her waist, bent over and kissed her on the neck. His need of her was so strong that he did not feel her lack of sympathy.

"Jess, dear, do you know what I have been turning over in my mind all day? . . . Do you know, I believe to God that everything would be all right for us if we had a child."

Now he felt her draw away.

"Don't be afraid! . . . Every woman goes through it sooner or later! Believe me, Jess, it is the only way out of all kinds of problems — *it is what is meant to be.*"

She gathered together all self-control and in a quiet tone said:

"You know how I feel about that, Fred."

With more authority than he had ever shown he said: "I've proved a little bit that I can cut drink out; I'll pick up life like a man from now on. And if I could only see in the future. . . ."

He stopped; he did not dare to go on.

Jessica rose from the porch step.

"Don't dress for dinner, Jess," he caught her skirt, "just stay as we are."

Fred followed her in. The little supper table was

simple but tasteful; everything around Jessica bore the stamp of her taste. In the center was a great bowl of roses, all beautifully open.

"Why, where'd those come from? Nothing like that grows around here!"

He was still holding her arm gently between his hands. Without rushing from the room she could not escape him.

When he remained the abject, half-sobered applicant for her goodness, a man timid with her, dreading to offend her by even a slight caress — that was one thing! But the man returned to his normal state, spurred on by the stimulus of outdoor life, claiming his rights — *that* was another thing indeed!

"Where'd you get your roses?"

She told him her first untruth. "I wanted some flowers — I ordered them from town."

Fred was conscience-smitten.

"Gee, I'm sorry, old girl! It was up to *me* to think of that! Believe me, you shan't have to send for your flowers yourself again."

Husband and wife sat down to the supper table, Fred in great spirits. He seemed to have gone back to boyhood, to young manhood, when things are fresh and full of promise and when by virtue of clean living a chap has a right to all there is to enjoy. He did not notice Jessica's silence; his own humor rode over it in masculine content.

After dinner Fred lit a cigar and threw himself down in a chair, smoking and devouring her with his eyes. She took up a basket where she kept some work for the soldiers and she began to knit a scarf.

"I asked the boys to come over and give us a little music after supper. You don't mind, Jess?"

Under the window of the living-room rose the tang of the banjo and the soft, liquid tuning of the guitar strings. A little group of negroes from Settlement began to sing. Nellie cleared away the table and put a big lamp on it in place of the dishes, and the books, magazines and Jessica's writing materials. The negro song came softly and sweetly in to Jessica and Fred:

"Down in the cane break
Hear the cheerful sound:
All the darkies am a'weepin';
Massa's in de ground."

"Jove, what do you think they chose that for? It's not much of a serenade, is it, old girl?" He bent over her, put his fingers around her neck. He kissed her several times, murmuring that she was "the best — the best in the world."

And they went up the little narrow stairs together an hour later, his arm around her waist. They went up like lovers, but the woman's soul and heart were not unto him.



The following morning Jessica, who had slept late, was awakened by the touch of a hand. She had been dreaming and into her dreams this soft touch fell. She opened her eyes with a long sigh and she came back to the day under a shadow, under the remembrance of sadness. At the side of her bed, her hand against his lips, his tears running down, Fred was kneeling, kissing her hand with all his soul.

She lay quiet for a moment, then withdrew her hand, and gently as a mother might have done, laid it first on his forehead, then passed it gently to and fro across his hair.

CHAPTER XI

"I wonder what Rafferty would think of me, Jess?"

"Why Rafferty especially?"

"Something here today brings back Black Fish to my mind. I never told you Rafferty called in New York that Sunday before we came South."

"Mr. Rafferty came to call on us in town?"

Fred laughed.

"You see, so much was happening just then — I forgot about the old boy."

They were walking their horses through the pines ten miles beyond Ricksville. The side of the mountain as it came down into James Valley was thickly wooded; there were first-rate bridle-paths through a wonderful riding country.

"I don't believe I'd care to see Mr. Rafferty, Fred."

"Why not, Jess? I owe Joe Rafferty a lot for the past."

"In what way?"

"First-rate hiding to begin with; then I owe him . . . you."

"Things happen in spite of Raffertys."

"I never forgot some of the things he said to me about the 'open.' There is nothing like outdoor-life, Jess, nothing like the world just as it is without houses and people. . . ."

He drew his horse alongside and put his hand quickly

out over Jessica's as it rested on the pommel of the saddle.

"There's nothing I like, like being out in the free air, alone with the best woman."

He had not been so happy since his boyhood. He had put on weight and Herrick was as nearly spiritual as he ever could be. He was so happy that he did not know what to do with himself.

Jessica never had to send to town for flowers. The living-room was a garden. The night before he had thrown a jewel-case in her lap and in the box lay a brooch of yellow diamonds held by a long pearl chain.

"Rafferty was simply great," he continued. "Told me all about his western home, his wife and his kids."

"He is married?"

"Of course, and *what* do you think he said as he was going out? Just the limit!"

"It would be from Rafferty."

"Why, the poor old boy told me that if I hadn't carried you off from Black Fish *he* was going to marry you himself!"

"Fred!"

"Come," said Herrick gently, "Jess, I don't think I like that tone you use when you are speaking about people that aren't heavy swells."

After a few seconds she said, as the horses picked their way through the pines and under the shadow of the great trees:

"If Joe Rafferty had asked me to marry him when he came back from the West, I would have married him."

Herrick turned around on his horse.

"What?" He gave a little laugh. "You mean to

say then, that you would have simply married anybody that came along?"

"If you call him anybody that came along."

In saying this she confirmed that which down in his soul, he knew to be true. She had married him only because her heart was breaking at Black Fish, because she was poor. Herrick had no illusions; these were the facts.

They chose their way carefully over the slippery ground.

"Look out, Jess! There's a nasty root — don't let her stumble."

He went on before her, holding back the branches as she came under them, astride her horse like a slender boy, her muscles fine as silk.

Herrick, happier than he had ever dreamed of being in his marriage, was not going to let anything spoil his contentment. Jessica was so wonderfully precious to him, and his sensibilities, never over-keen, failed to indicate to him that she was suffering.

"Jess, you are the greatest thing on earth."

"Please don't exaggerate like that, Fred."

"How'd you ever marry me?"

"You forget I owe you everything I have, Fred."

"My God!" he exclaimed. "If you speak of a debt, Jess, you will just about kill me."

She saw the flush creep up under his skin.

"No, no, Jess, people who are fond of each other don't talk about debts — it is give and take."

They came out to the open red road and the feet of their horses sank down into the soft, sandy earth. It was noon; the full light shone bright over the little river

lying between its reddish shores and the white farmhouse in the distance.

"It looks good to me — that little white house over there! Jess, that's *home!*"

* * *

Down there these days she had been facing her soul. It was true, she would have married Rafferty, would have done anything to have escaped the horror of her servile life and to pay Henshaw. So at eighteen she had sold herself and the man who paid deserved everything of her. She had made herself acknowledge this lately and faced it.

Bridget Shaughn had said once: "Dearie, never do anything jist because you're *poor!*"

And she had done it for just that reason.

She was part of Fred's goods and chattels, part of his fortune, his possession. He had paid the price and there was nothing for her to do but to give him what he had purchased and with as good a grace as possible.

Everything in the way of liquor had been ordered out of the house. Fred was keeping straight and Jessica was not the woman to stand by and refuse him her aid. She was doing her part to the full.

* * *

Before they reached the entrance of the place he let her ride ahead while he went around to the stables to speak to one of his men. It was one o'clock when he came back to the house.

For two months nearly there had not been a cloud on his horizon, not one so small as a man's hand.

Was what she had said true, really true? Would she have married that prize-fighter to cut the tangle of her life? . . . What she had done was to marry *him*!

There was nothing new to him in the knowledge that his wife did not love him as he loved her, but Herrick's adoration was so great that he hoped against hope that she would love him yet. The idea that when they should return to town he must lose her in the swift pace of life was intolerable! Down here had been a dream: he dreaded their return to New York!

CHAPTER XII

"You ought not to have come."

"You're not going to blame me, Jessica, now that we are together? You don't know what these three weeks have been for me."

"Why should you think they have been worse for you than for any others?"

He caught eagerly at this. "Oh, then they have been hard for *you* too?"

"Not the way you mean."

Two months after she had come south with Fred, she had met Atkinson at the Ricksville station in the stuffy waiting-room. He had wired that if she did not come to meet him there, he would drive out to the shooting-box and this had forced her to go.

"Your letters have been cold and cruel, Jessica."

"I did not mean them cruelly. Cold, possibly . . . I feel . . . cold . . . to everything."

He bore the marks of the strain of his political life and of anxious sentimental troubles. He put his arm up along the back of the little wooden seat and covering both her hands with his left hand said:

"You play a dangerous game with a man's heart, my dear."

"I have done what I thought I had to do to keep fine."

Outdoor life, quiet and repose, had added to her beauty and there was a new expression in her eyes which he tried to understand.

"Jessica, Jessica, you will come with me — you will come?"

"Come with you and leave Fred like that? No."

"My God! You mean you are going on as you are with Herrick?"

"There is nothing else for me to do."

"In God's name why? With all the roads there are!"

"Because it is right."

He threw back his head with a short laugh. "Right to muddle three lives?"

"I am not muddling three lives."

"You are going to wreck mine."

He seized her hand between both his and leaned down to her and she did not draw away, but the extreme whiteness of her face, her coldness, her unapproachableness, were her greatest weapons. He slowly relaxed.

"You *don't* love me, Jessica?"

He should have asked the question long before! And then again, with his face close upon hers:

"You *don't* love me, Jessica?"

She tried to speak and he gave a short exclamation, and put his hand over his eyes.

"My God," he said, "what were women made for?"

She let him sit for a second like that, then spoke:

"I will tell you what we were made for if you will forget yourself for a moment and listen."

He dropped her hand. "Go on," he said, "but I don't believe you know."

"We were made to be married and to stand by the man, at no matter what loss. We were not made to break vows like glass. I didn't know until I came here what marriage was, though I'd been married twelve

years. Until I found myself giving way to you I didn't know what marriage meant."

With a cry in his throat at these words Atkinson leaned down to her again.

"Then it *was* temptation! You *were* going towards me! Oh, *Jessica!*"

"You said you would listen. When I came down here and saw Fred trying with all his soul to climb, so that he could reach up to *me* — when I realized that I had done things in going away with you that day, in letting you kiss me the way I have, in getting your letters the way I have — I realized that I wasn't so high to climb to as Fred thinks I am!"

He exclaimed: "Why, there is no one like you."

"That is what Fred says — it is not true."

She stopped for a moment. People from the country came trooping in to take the little branch road that ran off from Ricksville into the State. There were negroes, women with poultry, women with little children, trailing through, trooping through, laughing, talking, and the two on the wooden seat, oblivious of everything but their own drama, sat gravely looking into each other's eyes.

"I want you to go back to Washington — go on the mission the President has given you and forget about me."

"Never."

"You will have to . . . if you really care for me. . . ."

Atkinson got up, so that she should not see his face, and went over to the window at the other side of the room, and with his arm across the casing leaned his head upon it.

The ticket-agent, who had been peering at them between the selling of tickets and making change, filled

with curiosity at the presence of this lady in country riding-habit and this gentleman, who had just left the New Orleans express, came now briskly out of his little cage office.

"Say, folks, I've got to shut up here in ten minutes — won't be any more trains anyway for an hour and a half after the Washington special."

Jessica rose. "When does the Special go north?"

"Seven minutes."

She went over to Atkinson and touched him on the arm.

"Your train goes north in seven minutes."

His face was like death as he turned round to her.

"Please take your ticket, please, *please*."

Atkinson obeyed her mechanically, bought his ticket to Washington with a set face; the agent put him through with great alacrity and Atkinson went out of the room on to the platform, Jessica following him. They stood there together for a few moments, then he turned to her, his face all working with emotion.

"I am not a child," he said, "to be sent home in disgrace. I am a man in the midst of his career, and I am building all my life around you."

"Some one else has built his life in me. I promised to stand by him to the end twelve years ago."

In the near distance they heard the cry of the Special's locomotive. It had stopped at the junction below to take on water. The agent came out, busy and important. He looked at them both. He had never seen the lady; the Herricks did not use the Ricksville station; but it was evident that there was "something doing here." Burning with curiosity, he walked down the platform and

from there, to the exclusion of his duties, stared at the lovers until the train came in.

Atkinson put out his hand and she laid hers in it, and he drew her towards him again.

"Jessica! . . . Come with me now!"

"I want to try and live my life as I should," she said, looking at him fully in the eyes, as she had hardly dared to do before today. "*I am going to tell you something that will make it easier for you to go.*"

"Nothing can do that."

"You have so often spoken of a child. . . ."

The train drew up slowly, heavily, alongside. He crushed her hand between his.

"Good-bye," she said quietly, "good-bye."

He got into the car, took his seat in the Pullman, close to the window, and did not once turn his face back to her, and she saw his profile as he sat, his hand covering his eyes, while the train moved out of the station, carrying its freight of lives and problems toward the north.

CHAPTER XIII

Fred Herrick had been having his own battle all day long. He had been struggling like a mad man, struggling to be free from his keepers against his drinking craving. He had gone out shooting; exercise was the only thing in the world that wooed him today and he came back just before luncheon and went in disturbed and restless, distressed. But he remembered that Jessica was there in the house and took cheer as he went up the steps to find his wife, whistling softly the old tune the negroes had sung in their serenade:

"Massa's in de cold, cold ground."

Then stopped and went in, calling: "Jess?"

No one answered.

At the foot of the little staircase he called again:

"Hello, Jess!"

The colored cook came running out of her kitchen.

"Was yo' callin' Mrs. Herrick, Mr. Herrick?"

"Yes."

"Waal, suh, she suttently rode over t' Ricksville."

Herrick interrupted her.

"Mrs. Herrick has gone to *Ricksville* now — at lunch time?"

"Yaas, sir. She done take de lil' Pierce Arrow — she's drivin' hers'f — she all said not to wait lunch."

"I don't want any lunch," said Mr. Herrick shortly. "Keep it in the kitchen — I do not want anything to eat."

He went into the dining-room with his hands in his

pockets, balked in his wish to see Jess. He went over to the sideboard restlessly, with the old habit hankering, and looked covetously at the place where the bottles used to stand. He *must have* something to drink, he *must*. He cursed his own order that had swept the house clear of stimulants.

If his wife had been any other woman, he would have gone over to Ricksville. He had a sensitive fear of doing anything to displease her and he knew that whenever she spent several hours with him at a stretch, she always slipped off alone for a time. She wanted her freedom. A smile curled his lip. She had paid off a great deal of her debt lately; she wanted to be free. Poor Jess!

Liquor could not have been all swept out of the garage! Some chap over *there* would have a drink. *Get it he must*.

As he went down the steps, on the last step was a bit of folded paper. He stooped and picked it up. It was a thickly written letter, folded over and over. He opened it, saw a line: "Darling, darling, *darling!*" three times written across the page.

He crushed the sheets in his hand, and thrust them into his pocket and went on toward the stables. Under one of the live oaks he opened the letter and read it through:

"Jessica, do you know what you are doing? You do *not* know what you are doing. I am going to tell you. You are ruining three lives: mine, Herrick's and your own. You are living with a man you do not love, and it is a crime. You are living with a man who is not fit to touch the hem of your dress, and it is a crime. A woman like you ought to be lifted up to the stars. That beast you have married cannot do that, you know. He was picked up drunk from under the tables in the Club two

nights before you went South. Break off this fearful bondage; come out into the world with me. I'm poor enough, but I'm not a confirmed drunkard. Let me make your life, Jessica, put you where you belong! Why, you are a pearl, you were made to shine on the very crown of the world! You're beautiful and you're clever and you're good. Come, Jessica, come! Be the mother of fine strong children. Jessica, think of the little lives calling to us, *think.*"

Fred's hand trembled so that he had to stop every now and then to scan the lines again. He wiped the sweat from his forehead as it stood out in great drops.

"What do you think it is to a man who adores you to know that you are walled up with a blackguard who has the right to you by law and the Church of God — a man whom you must despise? You told me not to write you and I have kept my word, but now they are sending me to London on a mission. Before I go, I must see you again, kiss you again, make you promise that when I come back you will be free."

Slowly, with a method that had something of madness in it, Herrick folded up the sheets of the letter and walked with uncertain steps back to the house.

CHAPTER XIV

Back from the turnpike, between Ricksville and Milltown, on the Herrick land, was a weatherbeaten farmhouse that Herrick had left, intending always to pull down. It was an eyesore to Fred, but beautiful to Jessica, its shingles as bright as silver, the grass growing out of it, the old roof tumbled down and gone to decay. The shanty had charm for Jessica and this afternoon on her way home it seemed to beckon to her from the pasture.

She stalled her car well up on the wayside, climbed the fence and went up to the old house, mounted the rotten porch. Leaning against one of the pillars, she could look down over the meadows to the narrow river road, where the flags and tall rushes made the river's borders green and clear.

It was early spring. The Herricks had lingered in the South longer than usual. The meadows were full of "butter and aigs," as the negroes call the yellow field flowers. Carrots were up, and the fields already soft with grass and the ever-living green trees, forever green.

Jessica leaned against the pillar. Far away northward wound and curved the broad bright ribbon of the James; a bit further on the raft-like ferry, on which many a time she had pulled herself from shore to shore, gently rocked on the small tide; and over to the left, black as night in its dark impenetrableness, the forest tapered away to the flats.

There was nothing to disturb her quiet, and before she

went back into what she had made of life she wanted to get herself in hand.

Before her was the wide sweep of land gently touched by spring. Born and bred with love of home and the open, the girl to whom woods were home, whose life had come from the forests, she was better able to think in the air and she mused until her heart ached for Grandy and Fortune Bay and the life she had loved. She longed to see the home that meant undisturbed peace, undisturbed happiness, and where all dreams seemed sure to come true! She could never go back again and be as she had been. . . . She might have done so even before this New Year had come in — never now!

She thought of all she had said to Senator Atkinson. She had told this man the fact that should have been Fred's and her secret only. She had bitterly rebelled, she had been, oh, so unwilling to believe the eternal fact true. She had been hoping against hope. She would be bound to Fred closely and for all their lives. There was no escape now.

She wanted to give her child traditions of noble men. Grandy! Oh, she was proud of Grandy! . . .

After all, what do traditions mean? Don't we make our own lives? Don't we stand where we want to stand and carve things and forge things out for ourselves? Don't we. . . . Oh, how much she had thought about it! What do forebears mean? How far do breeding and education and talent and race count?

She thought of the great battles that were being fought in the other world and of the traditions that were being mown down, cut down, reduced to the very earth of the field, and the new lives that must be coming up to stand

in room of the dead. Should not they, these new lives, have the best? . . . What could Fred give to their child?

She would do the very best she could for the child. It would be the salvation of the father; make him what he had said it would make him, a man!

Down in the trees at the meadow's foot she heard the whippoorwill calling and the plaintive sound broke the stillness. Fred would be anxious; she must hurry home.

What had she done with Atkinson's letter? She had worn it in her belt all day . . . it was gone. . . . If Fred should find it?

She hurried along the porch and down the broken steps and down the old broken brick wall, where the weeds and the grasses sprung between the crevices. Tonight she would tell Fred that she was going to bear him a child. She could see his face, the light in it. New caresses, his arms around her, extravagant, beautiful presents . . . it would mean, and she faced all it would bring — happiness to Fred, new manhood. And she was glad, glad, for she would adore it too.

As she came up to the house, she saw Nellie, her favorite negro-maid, standing by the little gate; the little lawn came up sheer from the picket fence to the door. Nellie opened the gate and came running down.

"Nellie, what is the matter?"

Jessica stopped the motor and sprang out of the car.

"Oh, Mis' Herrick. . . ."

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, Mis' Herrick honey, Mr. Frayde's he done gone 'way for good."

Jessica stopped on the first step of the porch, staring up at the colored girl's face.

"What do you mean — gone away for good?"

"Mister Herrick he done come in n' resh up to his room and shetter door n' he hollered out to me: 'Where de debbil am my suitcase?' n' I fon' it for him n' he popped his head out agin n' hollered at me: 'Order me roun' any old car' n' pretty soon he come reshin' out wif his suitcase n' he reshed down the stars like he seen gos' all over the house! N' he snash up his hat n' coat n' globbes n' I told Philip to run roun' de Fode n' Mister Herrick des frew himself onto the kyar n' he said to Phil: 'Drive like hell to the station.' N' he nebber spoke to me a wode n' I nebber dare spoke to him kese Mis Herrick nebber seen sesh a face as de face on him in all ma days."

"What do you mean, Nellie . . . gone for good?"

The negress continued gently to lead Jessica into the house.

"Come along upstairs, Mis Herrick, honey, to yo own room."

And Jessica let herself be led up to her bedroom, with its little windows wide open to the spring. She could see it from across the room on her pincushion . . . an envelope addressed to her in Fred's handwriting: "Mrs. Frederick Herrick."

Jessica tore it open. In it were two sheets of crumpled paper, crumpled as though they had been crushed and smoothed out again . . . crumpled and smoothed! It was Atkinson's letter.

CHAPTER XV

The first thing of which Fred Herrick was definitely conscious was murmuring an excuse to the man in the seat next him, over whose feet he had stumbled in taking his place in the section of the sleeper. Herrick fell into his seat, the porter threw his bag up into the rack and hung up his hat and overcoat.

As the train pulled out he regained his balance somewhat and began to feel and think. Before leaving the house he had thrown a few things into his suitcase, caught up his gloves and coat and hat and rushed out. He had a nasty taste in his mouth, felt as he had often felt after a hard night's drinking — sick all through. It was not the kind of sickness that would be better in the morning!

He did not know what he might not have done had he remained and seen Jessica. He would go north as far as Washington and fix things up with Atkinson. The passing of this man's name across Fred's mind was a sort of relief to the tension. He had been afraid of this thing ever since he had married her.

The conductor came for his ticket. He paid for his berth and realized that he was sitting next to a Roman Catholic priest and glanced at the man, whose calling shut him away from problems of sex into the contemplation of souls.

He got up and went into the smoking-car and sat

there, huddled against the window, his figure blurring with other men's figures in the smoky atmosphere of the car.

God, it couldn't be true!

It was true, though. And every word of the letter burnt itself on his brain.

Atkinson's references to himself made him violently angry. Who the devil was Atkinson to hold up a man's breeding and birth against him? Atkinson, no doubt, came himself from simple stock. Who was he to call a man a common bounder to his wife? Atkinson called him a beast!

The sweat stood out from his forehead as it had done when he first read the letter, and there in the rolling car of the smoker, surrounded by ordinary men pursuing their ordinary affairs, he saw scarlet and could have strangled Atkinson or struck him dead.

The words stood out as though carved on the air before him. "A confirmed drunkard . . . a beast . . . a man not fit to touch her dress!" Atkinson's worst thrust was: "Be the mother of fine strong children, Jessica."

Atkinson did not think he was fit to be a father or a husband.

And Jessica had rushed to the man who had spoken like this of her husband! He dropped his cigarette on the floor and crushed it out.

He would stop off in Washington, find Atkinson and have it out with him, if he went to jail for it.

So he sat and suffered. And then slowly, slowly, with determination and a gripping, cruel anguish, came the true meaning of the letter and insults to himself, vituperation, were wiped out by the power-meaning of Atkin-

son's letter to the woman whom he loved and who, Fred believed, loved him in turn.

No wonder Atkinson went crazy over Jessica! Any man would. But to dare to write to her like this and make the supreme demand upon her! . . . They must have been lovers a long time. . . .

Herrick bit his trembling lips. He had wiped his face so often that finally he was conscious of his act and looked about to see if any one had observed him, but the men were absorbed with newspapers and magazines and cigars, and unconscious of the miserable man.

The woman for whom he would have gone down to hell and have quenched the fires with his hands if it would have served her . . . this woman was untrue to him and loved another man!

Fred for the twentieth time, changed his position and took another one — thrust his hands in his pockets and dropped his head on his breast.

He could not kill Atkinson. There was not anything in that. If Jessica loved him it would not solve his problem to kill her lover. He was glad that he had not seen her again, that she had not come back to him at the dear little old house with another man's kisses on her face, another man's embrace about her, perhaps with the marks of tears on her face for a parting with Atkinson. O God!

And the tempest dashed against him as though his poor soul had been a pane of glass against which the arrows and darts of the storm broke. The car was fearfully hot, but Herrick was cold.

He had never been able to write her a letter like that, with his deep true passion ringing in it. He would not

have dared! He was afraid of her, timid before her. He simply did not dare to let himself think what Jessica must have been to Atkinson for him to write to her like this. If he had conceived it, he would have thrown himself from the train.

How long had it been going on? What a fool he had been not to see it! It must have begun last year. That was where Jessica had gone when she had been away all day in December, down to him! And Fred remembered how beautiful she had looked the night she came home. She had been with her lover and Fred had been such a poor fool that he had not understood.

He went over everything of their past in the short time in the smoking car. She had taken everything from him, that was true! He paid her bills, covered her with jewels, filled her bank balance and wore himself thin thinking of things to do for her. All that was true. She had a fortune of her own, but he had bound her, enslaved her by the marriage vow, by all it meant. She had been a submissive wife. And how he had suffered and writhed with the knowledge, much as he worshipped her! She only tolerated him and bore the yoke of their marriage, and brought to it really nothing of herself.

He could not stay in the smoker and he went back to his old seat down by the priest, who was reading a book of prayers. Herrick saw him distinctly as he passed him and took his place, an angular man, past middle-age, spare and ascetic.

Everything that Atkinson had said about him to Jessica was true. He was a drunkard. He came from the humblest stock. What had he brought to Jessica Tryst? Plenty of money.

As he said the word "money," what a poor limited thing it seemed, that great wealth of his, since it had not been able to buy her love, the only thing he wanted in the world!

Atkinson was right as far as his not being worthy of her. But had not he gone to Georgia with the firm determination to break away from drink, to pull himself up?

Then, with cruel sweetness, came the last months of the time with Jessica, all she had given him, all she had been. He had been half-witted enough to believe that she was growing to love him, that she was caring for him.

Herrick felt the man at his side put his hand lightly on his sleeve and he heard an Irish voice say to him in an undertone:

"There is a stateroom free at the end of the train. I am going to get the conductor to give it to us. Will you come?"

Herrick turned. The man was unmistakably an Irishman. Jessica was Irish; she loved everything about Ireland. Herrick rose. He said thickly:

"Let us get along out of here, anyway."

He sat bunched in the corner seat of the stateroom, his hands deep in his pockets, his head on his breast. The unhappy man from whom honor seemed torn away, turned pitifully to the motherhood in the woman he loved. How often he had thought about her as a mother! She was maternal, so beautifully made to be a mother in her perfect body, with its rich beauty.

If she had only been a mother all would have been different then.

So, thinking of her, as her picture tauntingly drew

itself before his mind, came again a revolt at her caring for another man. He had believed his wife to be devoid of passion and now the knowledge that she was far from being the cold, senseless woman he had imagined, that though he could not awaken her, another man could, caused him to suffer as he had never believed it possible to suffer.

He would go up to New York and put his affairs in order and then. . . . There were a lot of open doors for a chap who wanted to walk out of the muddle. Why had he not gone off down there with his dogs and his gun? That would have been an easy way!

He found himself in the corner of the divan in the compartment, with a little table pulled up before him and on it a cup of strong tea.

He was alone. The fragrance of the green tea was grateful. Moreover, like a crying animal coursing alongside of his mental excitement was the desire for something to drink. The desire which he had been fighting all day long down there in the hunting-box now seized upon him again and he drank the strong tea greedily, bending over the cup. The train swung and he doggedly went at his old subject, only broken up as he had followed the priest in here. He could drink himself to death — it would be a sort of revenge. It would be as though he threw his soul before her and said: "You killed it with my body."

The porter put beside him a dish of tempting hot, buttered toast and the priest followed and sat down opposite Fred.

"Glad you drank the tea."

"Thank you. It was refreshing."

Fred's voice was a shock to himself. It sounded strange, as though it belonged to another man. So it did indeed; for the man of familiar commonplace things of yesterday had been a fortunate chap with a wife and a home, and the one who spoke now had been made an outcast.

"I want you to eat some of the toast." The priest nodded at it and smiled at Herrick.

"I could not touch a thing, not a thing."

"I want you to try."

"Couldn't touch a bit of food, thanks."

"A fellow said that to me," said the priest, "just before going into a big battle. He confessed that he was afraid of going into the fight. I made him eat a good meal and drink two or three cups of tea and he went on both feet."

The voice of the man opposite Herrick was as sweet as honey and as rich as gold. It was full of softness; it was deep with power; it had the particular quality that voices have when they are used by intelligent minds to move and to affect and to play upon human sensibilities. Under its pure diction, for he was an Oxonian, was the music of his own country.

"Eat," said the priest, and pushed the plate over to Herrick. "I know you are hungry."

Fred had not touched a morsel since the early breakfast which he had eaten with his wife that morning at half-past seven, before going out to ride.

"Do you think I am a coward?" he asked with a thin smile, "and that you are feeding me up for some kind of a fight?"

Herrick took up a piece of toast and tasted it; it went

down. Before he could defend himself, another cup of tea was there and he drank it.

"I think," said the Irishman, "that we face it, whatever our problem may be, better on a full stomach. We are materialistic and rationalistic enough for that."

"I must have looked pretty rotten," said Herrick, "out there in the car, for you to have taken me away like this! Did I?"

"I thought you needed to be able," said the priest. "And now I want you to lie down here." He took Herrick's overcoat and rolled it up and made a pillow of it, and put it at the end of the sofa. "I want you to lie down here the length of you."

"I couldn't go to sleep," said Herrick.

"Close your eyes. I'll be without and I'll come back in half an hour. Close your eyes."

He lay there, rocked by the swing of the train, and his nerves and his brain fell into something like coma. He slept profoundly, heavily, woke with a start and before he could fully waken, fell back into sleep again. And he saw Jess through his sleep, her lovely figure lying on the pine-covered ground, her hand behind her head, laughing up at him. He saw her as in the first days at Black Fish; she came holding up a tray of piled dishes to bring him his first meal. Her cheeks were scarlet, her eyes so blue! He saw dozens of pictures of her in his troubled sleep, all of them lovely, and under their spell, the name between his lips, woke and sat up. The priest was there in the little seat opposite, his breviary before him on the little table. Herrick sat right facing the man, rubbing his hands together as though he was washing them clean, only half conscious that he had a companion.

"You are not a Catholic?"

"I was baptized in a Catholic church, but I don't believe in any religion."

"The Church never loses any of her children, however. A son is a son to his mother even though he denies her."

Herrick only half heard him. The voice was agreeable and he did not resent his companionship. He could not have been alone long without in some way carrying out what had become a fixed purpose.

"I have no interest in life but hearts and souls," said the man opposite Herrick. "You must not mind if I see that it is a hard time you are having."

Fred Herrick put his hands up to cover his lips; they were unsteady. He cleared his throat, then asked in a fairly commonplace tone:

"You have been over there," Herrick threw his head back, "in France?"

"I was not in France when the war broke out," said the priest. "I was in Belgium on a mission and I have never left the battle line except to come over here. Now I am on a mission here."

Herrick glanced at him, felt his charm and his power, was grateful to him for his human kindness; but he did not take hold of him in the storm yet. He turned his head slowly toward the window, stared out at the marshes as they seemed to fly past. The priest sat back under the faint light of the lamp and read his book.

"You are not going into the dining car?" he asked after a few moments.

"No."

The smoke blew against the panes. The train was two hours late and making up time, and ran at a frightful

speed; and the swift motion over the rails and the noise of its going made a fitting accompaniment to Herrick's rushing thoughts.

There was not a single thing in the world he wanted to pick up now. He could not live on the face of the earth with the thought that Jessica was going to belong to another man; and he could not live on the face of the earth with the thought that he was in her way, that she wanted to get rid of him, to be free.

Presently the Irishman opposite him put his book down on the little table and with one finger turned the leaves and put his other hand over it.

"I have been watching you. I watched in the other car. I felt something of the black waters you are going through coming up to my very feet. I don't know what the trouble is; I don't ask to know — although, believe me, to confess is one of the sweetest, holiest things that man can do. It is what a child does to his mother, and we are all children until we lie down to die. Never mind that, though — never mind. Don't tell me anything. But I have been watching you and I know what you are planning to do; I can read it plain as though it was written across your face. I have seen men die over there by thousands on the fields of their country, on the earth of their land, for patriotism. I have seen them die like men. And I couldn't see a big strong man, a fine man, think of death in cold blood and not cry out to him!"

The Irishman's face seemed to shine under the lamp upon him. Herrick had never seen such blue eyes except Jessica's — blue, blue, kind eyes that could laugh and cry and be angry. They were almost wrathful now with their holy spell.

"A man can give his life, my son . . ." said the priest, " . . . for others; he can lay it down under his flag; he can go to a lepers' colony and nurse the rotten bodies there until his flesh turns white with the foul disease; he can lay his life down for science; wear it down in toil for bread. He can do everything with it for glory, or for man or God. But a man may not take his own life."

Herrick heard the priest's voice through a daze.

"You belong to God and not to yourself or to any human being. God has a right to your life."

Still Herrick did not stir.

"I am going back to Belgium. We need you over there; we need men; they have been mown down like ripe corn. If you want to *give* your life," he said and faced Herrick, "give it to God. If you don't believe in God, give it to me."

The doze on the divan of the compartment was his only rest. The motion of the train harried him, egged him. It was maddening, a horrible incantation, a song rail for his rapid thoughts to run on. The train's voice urging him to make haste . . . and get out!

He put his hands above his head in the position in which he always had slept since his boyhood; there he lay staring wide-eyed at his life as he had known it, at the Death he was going to face.

He supposed that the Padre was sleeping a righteous sleep down in the lower berth.

Herrick's meditations had always been material; there had never been a spiritual note in them, not one. As he lay, strained in every muscle, there came a cyclonic crash as of two worlds meeting and crashing in a ferocious concussion. There was a sound like ripping and tearing,

as though a mountain had sundered; there was a dashing forward of his car, a quivering and a rocking. Then a violent shock and a standstill.

Fred picked himself off the Padre. They had been pitched from their berths to the floor. One of them tore open the door of the compartment with the instinct for escape. Without speaking to each other they found themselves in the pitch-dark carriage, making their way to the exit, and were out of the car and on to the tracks before either spoke, shot as it were from their berths into the night. Theirs was the last carriage of an abnormally long train and it stood alone on the rails, the only lights in sight the swinging lamp at the rear and the light on the switch and the stars.

"My God!" said Herrick. "It is a frightful collision!"

They stared at each other, Herrick bare-foot and in pajamas; the priest was as he had sat before Herrick. He had not undressed.

In front of them rose the network and iron framework of all there was left of a suspension railroad bridge, and beneath them, swollen by the last rains, rushed the river in the blackness. It was obstructed now, dammed as it had never been before by big-piled-up masses of iron work and timber and impacked cars.

Two abnormally long trains from the North and the South had collided in the middle of the bridge, gone down into the stream.

Herrick and the priest, hanging on to one another, leaned over and looked down. And the night began to call up to them. Or was it the river, that since it was born had never had an articulate voice before?

Herrick, staring at the priest, covered his ears to quiet

them. Back of them, immovable, like a funeral car waiting for the dead, was the single carriage of their train. In the collision, with the terrible abruptness of the impact, this last car had been severed from its attachment to the train, had been shaken off as though it had been a dice shaken by the hand of Fate. It quivered, rocked, but kept its balance, and there it stood alone.

For another second the priest stared down into the abyss, now uttering such frightful cries. Already down the line came the swinging lights of people hurrying with lanterns, voices calling as they ran.

The priest seized Herrick by the arm.

"Come," he said, "come! Why do we stand here? Don't you hear them calling us?"

He ran to the back of their car and unbuckled the swinging lantern and in another moment Herrick was following him barefoot and in pajamas down the bank.

* * *

It was long after eight o'clock next morning, by the watches of the dead, which had gone on ticking and ticking all through the horrors — long after eight o'clock when he realized that good as his will was, he could stand no longer on his bare, bleeding feet.

He had for a long time heard the sound of his own labored breathing; it came heavily to his ears and it hurt him now when he breathed. He was half naked, and what was left of his pajamas clung to him, wet and dried several times, for he had swum out, waded out, over and over again to the half-submerged wreck and to those frightful, gruesome cars. He was covered with blood,

not his own, which had mingled with some of his, for both of his sleeves had been torn away by frantic hands grasping him, making efforts to climb by means of the human ladder that he was out of the living death.

He had not stopped for broken glass and splintered wood in his arms and hands; even his chest bled from deep scratches not serious enough to prevent his going on.

He leaned on the bank against an overturned sleeper, from which the last dead and living had been carried, and, panting like a tired dog, tried to catch a breath long enough to enable him to go back. A woman from one of the little country houses on the hill gave him a cup of hot strong coffee and he drank it at a draught.

"Nothing stronger, Boss," she said, "but God knows that if I had a real drink I'd give it to ye."

The place was black for half a mile with helpers, with railroad men, with the town folks of the nearest towns, the fire brigades of two counties, the militia, men and women, doctors and nurses — to drag out of the flood, to snatch from death by water, fire and suffocation, wretched beings who twelve hours before had been happy and loving.

Of these there were two vital, vigorous, remarkable figures, a Catholic priest and a gentleman in torn pajamas; and both seemed unconscious of danger and possessed of supernatural endurance.

From the moment that he had left the railroad tracks and rushed with the Padre down the hill to the embankment, Herrick had lost all sense of himself; whether he had been smitten by the shock into another aura or not, he had, at all events, gone out of his own. Directed by groans, screams and cries, he went his own rescuing way,

with what weapons he could find of stones and bits of iron from the wreck. He broke in windows, he pried loose doors; he seemed possessed of unheard-of strength. Athletic, big and very strong, he moved like a giant and did a giant's work. In the terrible excitement of the moment he brushed away blood and sweat and tears, as a woman clung with both arms around his neck and kissed him over and over again when he gave her back her child out of the flood.

He saved many lives. On one of his journeys back from the river, as he climbed up the bank, he saw the Padre bending over what was left of a man. The Padre was making the Sign of the Cross as Herrick, dripping, breathing hard, passed him. The words of the country sermon flashed through his mind: "Bless me, even me, oh, my Father."

As he passed close to the priest, the Irishman rose from his knees and saw Herrick carrying a burden. Their eyes met and the Irishman lifted his hands and made upon Herrick the Sign of the Cross. Herrick bowed his head slightly and toiled on up the hill with the scarred and wounded weight he carried. He saw that the priest was as wet as he was, to his undershirt and trousers, barefooted. Like Herrick, he was a perfect swimmer; the last Fred saw of him was his figure striking out across the stream toward the debris in the river.

* * *

Now Herrick could not go another foot farther. He had done his toll and drank a second cup of coffee, but no strength came. And yet the horror was still there.

Fainter, and perhaps all the more soul-sickening, the cries came to them on the morning air. Herrick began to tremble violently and began to be conscious of Fred Herrick.

He was cold, he was hot, he was sick to the very marrow. He was no longer a human Titan; he was a thoroughly exhausted man, about to break down. He had worked without remittance for nearly ten hours. He knew, he felt that if he should stay here another half hour he would go raving mad. He wanted to escape, to go away, to shut out the cries.

To the right, in the distance, was the forest, dark in the morning light. He worked his way over the dead and the living, over those whose faces were covered, and nameless mutilations. He ran into the forest, limping on his bleeding feet over trunks of fallen trees, finding at last a path which he took, limping, hurrying to shut out the sound of the river and the sound of the voices.

After a while he threw himself down on the bare earth, on the damp green moss, and buried his face in it. He felt the coming sobs to his lips. He lay for some time, his hands in the moss, his face against the ground like a primitive man, beaten and bruised by the wheel of existence and thrown off into the breast of Mother Earth. As he soothed finally and quieted somewhat, his breathing became more regular; he began to swing back to his own balance and to realize what had come before the accident.

It seemed as though the Death which had been waiting for himself had been shown him by God's Mirror in every face. That was Death! That was what it meant! And Death according to the Will of God — so he sup-

posed. The Will of God had not chosen to take his poor, puny life, but He had asked him to save.

Up in the green tree under which he lay a bird began to sing. He knew nothing about the birds' songs, although he was a sportsman, but this . . . how good it was! A song of life, clear music coming from a little warm body, created by the Will of God.

His knees drawn up and his dirty, bruised hands clasped about them, Herrick listened. Gratitude stirred in him, a vibration that was clear joy because his life had been spared. Many had perished. He was alive. Life was a precious thing. There was a wonderful sense of freedom in his half-clothed body. He went, led on by the song of the birds, heard voices and came upon a clearing and a shanty, where a woman stood, wiping dishes in an open doorway. As Herrick staggered up to her the woman came forward.

"My Lord!" she said. "You are one of them poor creatures from the wreck, ain't you? Lean on me."

She helped him in.

"Thank you," he said, "thank you. If you could give me a bed and let me wash up, I feel as though I could sleep for a hundred years."

BOOK IV

CHAPTER I

He had come to London in March, 1915, and after standing for hours in one of the long lines in front of a recruiting office, Fred Herrick finally got inside, came out a volunteer in the British Army and was sent to Salisbury Plain.

He could not have asked for a more complete loss of identity! From then on he was merely a bunch of flesh and bones on which to hang a uniform. Bill Hounslow, Private, did not matter to anybody and nobody watched for the day when he should go to France. He only made friends in the ranks when he was certain that there was no risk of betraying his history.

For years he had not gone in for sports excepting shooting in the South, and now he responded magnificently to regular hours, hard work, out-of-door life. He made an excellent soldier, received his promotion and left England with his regiment for "somewhere in France."

That afternoon in March at Victoria, Corporal Bill Hounslow, of Princess Pat's Regiment, off for France, bought the papers at the news-stand and popped into his corner of the third-class carriage already crowded with his own men.

It seemed to him that there was not a soldier on the platform not accompanied by a mother, sister or sweetheart; no one without a dear, wet-eyed woman to bid him good-bye, except himself. The partings, the clings,

the frantic kisses, the control, the smiles, the big courage of it all, made him desperately lonely.

He opened *The Graphic*, glanced through the pictures, but could not get his mind off the cheering crowd outside — the music, calls and whistlings. Decidedly the regiment was having a great old send-off!

He had never dreamed that it would be so big a thing as this, going to France! For months he had been envying the men who had gone . . . and now it was his turn.

From the moment that he had waked up in the cabin in the woods after the accident, he had completely lost his identity — and had wanted to lose it, but he would have liked now to have made himself part of this solemn farewell, to have been one with the partings. He thought how his mother would have helped him go away, of her goodness, her patience with him. This certainly was the mothers' moment.

Of his wife he did not think. He believed that he had left Jessica for ever in the South, with his name and his personality.

His mother would have been quiet and strong, like that gentle-faced woman over there, smiling such a heavenly smile, with not a quiver to show how the heart of her quivered! His mother would have kept her eyes on him that way, steadily, as she had used to keep them on his father when the old man needed her.

The wheels were moving, turning to the cries and to the voices, and to the long good-byes. The band's music and the sob, it seemed, smote him like an anguish as they pulled out. And he kept his look fixed on the mother's face, on her smile, her steady eyes.

Fred sank back in his seat with a sigh and opened his

Graphic. On the center page was a copy of the portrait of his wife.

He stared dumbly; he grew red all over, burning all over. There she was, his wife . . . *his own woman*. She had been all his! There was her clear brow, her warm skin, her beautiful hair, the grey, clear eyes . . . Jess . . . maddening, adorable Jess! She wore her English habit — she had used to hunt a lot — her crumpled glove, and the wedding-ring which he had put on her finger in Boston the day that he had married her out of hand. Poor Jess!

No wonder they reprinted her portrait! All the other women looked like dried fish alongside of her. This was his wife, whom he had run away from because . . . ?

"I say, Corp, got a match?"

Herrick fumbled and found one.

"What are you staring so jolly hard at in the pipers? Give us a look!"

Herrick shut the *Graphic* and handed over another paper.

There was a paragraph, a whole paragraph about Jess:

"Mrs. Fred Herrick, of New York, whose husband was killed in a railway accident last spring, when two fast trains collided on the Delaware Bridge, has come to London with Mrs. Langforde to open an Ambulance on Carlton Terrace, and their hospital will be shortly ready to receive a hundred wounded. Mrs. Herrick's little son, Fred Herrick, Second, was born at No. 6 Carlton Terrace."

The Tommy to whom he had given the other papers appeared satisfied with them. The other men were smoking, laughing, singing, or silent, absorbed in the parting.

Her son was born in Carlton Terrace. *Their son . . .* Fred Herrick, Second . . . named for him! God! A child . . . a child of his and hers, no doubt with her good looks! His child and hers was in the world, being so fast unpeopled of the sons of men!

Herrick rolled the *Graphic* in a tight ball in his brown muscular hands. One of his men gave him a cigarette and he put it unlit between his teeth.

A soldier watching his Corporal thought: "It has hit the Corp darned hard to say good-bye to *some one*."

London was back there; he was rolling away from it with a thousand men and more, going to France. London, with its six million souls, was behind him, but for him there were but two human beings in the people — a woman and a child. There had been no one on the platform to launch him on his great adventure, yet he had a wife in London and she was a mother!

The men's voices singing and laughing were inaudible to Hounslow. He might have been alone on the face of the earth. What was the little beggar like? Was he like Jess? A son! Something to fight for, to stand for and to regenerate for!

No. 6, Carlton Terrace! He had passed that door as they marched, and she had been in there with her baby, asleep — or had she been holding him to her breast?

Here some one touched his knee.

"I say, Corp, are we downhearted?"

He shook himself, pulled himself together; he was the officer of these men.

"I have got a thundering headache, a real crusher. I'll try to get a wink of sleep."

Thinking they would leave him alone, he shut his eyes and leaned his head back on the seat.

Couldn't he stop the train and run back on the rails?

No. He was a British soldier going to France. Other men had left wives and sons. . . .

She believed him dead. He *was* dead to her. She believed her son to be fatherless and herself to be free — a widow.

He would have a permission in a few months and he could go back. . . . He would telegraph her from Southampton. . . .

Why, he had dropped all that; he was Corporal Hounslow of the Princess Pat's Regiment, going to France.

Jessica would marry Atkinson as soon as a decent period of time had elapsed. What would they tell the boy about his father? Why had not Jessica told him this? And as he wondered, back to his mind with electrical force came the thought of Atkinson's letter.

It was not his son! It was Atkinson's! Here he put his hand across his mouth to shut out his cry!

The train slowed through a station, making its way between the crowded platforms and the cheerings of the people.

"Are we downhearted? . . . No . . . No . . . No-o-o!"

Corporal Hounslow rose with the others as they crushed and crowded forward together in the little window. He felt one man's hand on his arm and bent forward cheering, calling, whistling, surrounded by a Nation's cheers and cries.

He felt the bodies of the soldiers as they crowded close

to him, the warm human smell of the crowd, the feel of flesh and blood, the touch of the comrade, the brother.

Let her go . . . let the woman go. . . . She had cared nothing for him . . . she had flung her infidelity in his face. He had no wife, no son. But he was a soldier, he had Brothers, Comrades. They loved him and they were going with him on this great Journey.

"Buck up, Corp!" the man said who had spoken first. "We'll be back in no time. There will be letters coming — buck up!"

And as he pressed to the window, cheering with the others, he felt the warm breath on his cheeks of a man next him, and thrust his head out and screamed with him, taking life from the moment and from the ecstasy and excitement, so intense and so terrible in those first days of the war.

CHAPTER II

This was his first night in Ireland since the day war had been declared, and Home was wonderful indeed to the soldier! Brian's other leaves had been spent in London with his mother, who was attached to the war work at Devonshire House.

When he had first come to O'More Castle after his uncle's death he had taken possession of a westward suite of rooms, the most remote, but with an unbroken view of the sea from every window, and as he stood shaving, he could look to the west, where tonight the midsummer sea spread like a floor across which one could walk. He made happily sure that familiar things were in their places. It was ripping, this home fragrance . . . delicious air, salt from the sea, sweet with turfy smells, a bouquet whose scent had come to him on night watches in France.

Ireland was more home to him than anywhere else. He had been born in Ireland; spent his holidays there with his uncle, and always called O'More his home. Now it was his own to cherish and to live for, if he ever should come back alive.

He was now going down to dinner, in uniform. He whistled softly, as he shaved, a few notes of "Tipperary" and then the tune changed.

This return was one of the poignant things of his life and he could never forget how it had made him feel to

see his mother's figure in the doorway, waiting. But homecoming and all that were not the chief cause of his excitement.

He finished shaving, got into his tunic, strapped his belt, a fine, upstanding figure of a soldier man, slender, wiry, with plenty of bone and muscle and little flesh to spare. A woman might well be eaten up with pride to claim him for son.

Brian whistled as he went out of his dressing-room through his little cell-like study, through his bedroom, where the candles winked behind him and his long shadow fell across the floor and walked along the walls, broken between the walls and the ceiling. He was whistling as he went: "I want you, my Honey, Yes I do!" an old darky tune!

(How the dancing feet tapped on the boards of the rustic platform!)

As he ran downstairs, with both hands in his pockets, he was keyed to a high pitch; he was living with other millions the intense life of a fighting man; he did not know how much of him would return, or whether his bones would bleach on the fields of another country. He was part of the big moment; but just now he was a boy, happy in the paradise of his own Home.

Windows and doors were open to the evening and a warm western breeze, breathing, scarcely blowing, and flowers everywhere, roses, masses of blood-red roses, creamy white, pink and yellow; and over three deep-set windows, their casements open wide, chains of Gloire de Dijon rose-vine clung and hung and dripped the yellow roses, pressing close to the old stones, yearning out all their fragrance and beauty to the Master. He looked at

the three windows as he passed — not seaward windows, but giving on to the terrace — and he could see the feeding sheep and the green leaves and trees and boughs.

Lady Sylvia O'More, as she waited in the door of the drawing-room, did not know that this was the Day of Brian's whole life, not only because he was safe back, but because of another Woman. He put his arms round his mother, kissed her again and again. She had dressed for him, beautifully, though she had spent almost nothing on herself since the war.

As the son and the mother stood in the deep window, the rare old things with which the room was full for a background for their two human figures, they were as harmoniously part of the room as though they had been woven in tapestry.

"Brian, I had them put us a table on the western terrace, darling. It is so warm — don't you think it will be nice to eat out of doors?"

"Jolly, but it's eating indoors that startles me now, mother."

He led her on to the brick terrace which faced the cliff, and the sea, reddened under the sunset, lay beyond bright as blood.

There was a small table spread for two, a bowl of red roses in the center and the light poured over them as though in this July of 1918 there was nothing but blood to pour out.

Brian was thinking: "I shall have to wait until after dinner, until we are alone, to tell her."

There were mutual interests, the death of those they loved, the coming of new lives, their own affairs and the affairs of all the countries to touch upon, the joy of

meeting, and the knowledge of his going in eight days — and the Question: “God, *when* will the next time be?”

All this . . . and in Brian’s heart was the knowledge that soon, soon he should see a certain Woman again, that she was where he *could* see her again! And in a few moments a thrill would run through him when he should say her name aloud to his mother.

It took long for the dark to come: it was soft as silk, rich as velvet, and folds of it rolling in from the calm sea, deep blue, dark, scented sweet and scattered through with fireflies. Lady Sylvia saw the glow of Brian’s cigarette between his fingers as he sat a little way from her.

“Mater . . .” and as though he had leapt to her suddenly “ . . . I want to tell you tonight why I never married. You remember coming to see me up in my rooms at the House the night Uncle Brian died?”

“Perfectly.”

“I wanted to tell you then. . . . I wish I had told you then, but I was a coward and we were so ghastly poor. . . .”

“Brian!” He heard the pain in her voice. “Don’t tell me anything tonight, darling, that will break my heart . . . don’t!”

“There, mother! You said something like that *then* — I wish you hadn’t.”

“Brian!” She could see him lean forward, his arms upon his knees, his cigarette glowing as he puffed it.

“I had just come back from the States. . . .”

“I know . . . I remember.”

“Over there I met a wonderful girl. I didn’t know her much; we only spent a little time together. There was

not anything in the world between us, but . . .” he broke off and she heard him laugh softly. “There,” he said, “isn’t that rottenly conventional? — Nothing in the world between us but *Love*, real Love.”

“Brian!” she breathed.

“You need not worry; there is no need for worry. She was a beautiful, exquisite thing, just a girl, and I treated her shamefully. She was poor; I kissed her once and ran away.” He heard his mother sigh and felt that she had relaxed. “Oh,” he said, “you are glad I ran away? . . . Well, that little girl up there in the State of Maine was the reason I never married.”

“A sentimental folly, darling.”

“Love.”

“You have got a great deal more than this to tell me, Brian. . . .”

“Yes,” he said practically. “I saw her in New York when I was over on my mission last year. I met her at one of the really smart functions in New York; I met her at Nora Langforde’s. She was married.”

“Oh, she was married!”

“To a sickeningly rich bounder.”

Lord O’More left his chair. He walked a little way along the terrace, smoking, then threw away his cigarette and came and stood close to his mother. Lady Sylvia was all in white; her white dress and her white face shone in the darkness.

“Now,” he said, “she is in London. She is living there; I saw her yesterday.”

Lady Sylvia’s face was lifted to him in the dark. This was his first permission home. . . . Mother and Son together . . . and God knew when they would be again

like this. . . . And between them, with her hands on her son's heart, was another woman.

"She is living in London; she has an ambulance. Her husband is dead." He waited a moment. "You understand, mother . . . if she'll marry me. . . ."

There was something hard in Lady Sylvia's little laugh.

"If she marries you! Why, she'll jump at the chance! Any American woman would!"

She heard him murmur: "I wonder!"

"You wonder if she'll marry you, Brian — this widow of a common American bouncer?"

"I wonder," he said slowly, "if I stand the least, remotest chance in the world!"

* * *

During his permission he drew his mother to let him talk of Jessica, and she listened with the biggest ache in her heart that she had ever known. This cold woman, who had no emotional outlet, had her heart fixed on this son and held to him with her eternal soul. She wanted Brian to marry; she had never faced the thought of his loving.

"Fancy, Mother! After I left she found herself absolutely poor, with a whole lot of debts, the very house over her head mortgaged!"

Lady Sylvia smiled faintly. She had been absolutely poor many times and there had always been lots of debts!

"Fancy, mother — how plucky she was! What a good sort! What a ripping little sport! She went and waited in some kind of a Cure for nervous patients."

"How do you mean . . . waited, darling?"

"Oh, just that, mother — waited in the dining-room at tables."

"You mean she took the position of a common servant?"

"I mean she worked for her living and paid her debts."

"What a horrid story!"

"If you could see her, mother! Wait till you see her! If you could fancy a creature like Jessica Tryst married to a drunken brute! God!" he said, "I wish I could buy back all her years, give them back to her from the hour I saw the sun pouring on her as she lay under the trees!"

"And this . . . man . . ." Lady Sylvia asked, "why did she marry him?"

"What could she do?" Her son threw out his hands. "Turned out of a sanatorium because he compromised her! Jessica made the mistake of her life. She paid for it, poor darling."

So Lady Sylvia found Jessica Herrick everywhere. She walked on the terrace with them; their steps fell side by side — Brain's clean-cut soldier steps, her own keeping good pace with him, and the inaudible steps of the Strange Woman. Jessica sat at their table, invisible, but present. No matter what their subject of conversation, Captain O'More brought it round to Jessica. Lady Sylvia tried to interest him in mutual affairs crying to be attended to, and Brian spoke of Jessica. His mother had a thousand questions to ask; he answered them quickly and came back to Jessica Tryst.

"He was frightfully rich; they lived in New York in great style. That was when I met her at Nora Lang-

forde's. You can't think how wonderful she was that night! After not seeing her for twelve years! But I thought then that her face was tragic; her eyes had a haunted look. She was wretched, simply wretched. . . ."

"You never spoke to me of her, Brian, never before."

"What was the use? — she was married."

Jessica went with them into Lady Sylvia's morning-room, where she sat knitting when it was too hot to go out of doors, Brian at her knee, touching her wool, as he used to sit when he was a little boy, in the intimate room where she had used to give him lessons herself when they stayed at O'More Castle, where she had dreamed of having him now all to herself — Jessica Tryst came invisible and present.

"Then they were down somewhere in the South in the spring of 1915 and he was killed in that horrible railway accident — do you remember, when two trains collided on the bridge?"

Lady Sylvia covered his brown hands as they lay on the wool, sounding his blue eyes, and she saw that his face changed because his eyes had looked with passion on another woman's face.

"I never heard any of it till the other day. Fancy, mother! Before coming home I went into a private ambulance at Carlton Terrace to see old Jerry Dacre, and whom did I meet there but Jessica, standing in the hall as I went in." Brian laughed softly and Lady Sylvia saw his face dark and warm with feeling. He sat back in his chair and put his hands in his pockets, looked out of the seaward window to the Irish sea, churning up milkily under a freshing wind. "I knew I should see her sometime . . . *I always knew. . . .*"

Lady Sylvia put down her scarf.

"It is her own hospital; she is running it all herself, and she is living in Carlton Terrace — she has a beautiful house. . . ."

"And the man is dead?" asked Lady Sylvia.

"Yes, she's free."

Throughout the eight days of Brian's permission Lady Sylvia shared him with another woman, and she knew that when Jessica should come she would have to give him up. She had never adored him so; he seemed the most beautiful of all sons. And as she thought of the French fields and how men went there not to return, she thanked Heaven that this was Life, not Death. She felt that when the time came for Brian to go she would be cold as ice all through, trying as ever not to let him see how she felt.

She said: "When you have asked her, darling, wire me, won't you? I can hardly wait."

CHAPTER III

Other babies had been there before Frederick Herrick, Second, in the nursery at the top of the big house in Carlton Terrace which Mrs. Herrick had rented for the term of the war. Bright and light and clean and white, the room was like a happy island where Jessica loved to go. Her restless, passionate, unsatisfied, demanding human heart was at peace there. Against the day when she hoped to really be satisfied, she left her heart in the keeping of her little child.

The pulse of London beat with war. From her windows wounded men could be seen lying in their cots on the open terrace of her ambulance. The streets were full of traffic going warward, of men going and coming, of news cried, of women in uniforms; and the restless cruel anguish reached from London to Constantinople.

But inside Frederick Herrick, Second's nursery all was peace. He had gone to sleep on the white lap of his mother's uniform and she had sung him to sleep. She was alone with him, as she liked to be, for his nurse had gone down to tea. Jessica loved the voice of London streets, subdued, as up to her lovely room it came to her full of music. Even motor-horns were not inharmonious. Tonight there had been a ceaseless sound of marching feet, and now came the sound of pipes, Highlanders marching.

She had gone heart and soul and mind into war work,

become part of the moment; and yet there in the nursery with little Fred she forgot London and its multitudes. Tonight she had sung Fred to sleep with: "I want you, my Honey, yes I do!" and its melody was American. The South, where she had been when the news had come to her of Fred's death, came poignantly back to her. The sleeping child on her lap was too heavy to hold long; humming the negro tune so that he should not waken, she put him softly down on his little bed.

The negress who shared this kingdom with Jess came in, a Georgian negress, black as coal.

"Look-a-hyar, Mis' Herrick," the colored woman's authority was sweet because it was loving, "yo all go straight downstairs and leabe me 'lone wif ma childe!"

"I sang him to sleep, Nellie."

"Mis' Herrick, dere's somebuddy downstairs in the morning-room wishin' to see you."

Jessica stood transfixed at the door; every particle of color left her face; her eyes on the colored girl's face grew large and wide.

"Sho now, Mis' Herrick. . . ."

Although she knew that he was dead, although she was a widow, using the income of the Herrick millions, although she knew that somewhere in that sinister river Fred Herrick's body lay, Jessica had a startled idea that some time he might return. The negress had seen her mistress go white like this before.

"I gave orders not to let *any one* in. . . . I told Burke I would not see any one. . . ."

"Mis' Herrick, dis geminen suttiny wouldn't let Burke denounce him; he wanted I shoud."

"Oh, Nellie!"

Jessica wound her hand in the apron string of her uniform.

"Get along, Mis' Herrick," said the negress, laughing and nodding. "Don't go for to look like dat, mam, Mis' Herrick. It is nobuddy but Mister Semtanor Atkinson, Mis' Herrick honey."

Nellie gave the delicious giggle of the real darky, a musical carol in the throat, full of humor and mirth, intimate and delicious.

Henry Atkinson!

Jessica rushed back to life with the hot red that ran over her. Henry Atkinson here! She had last heard from him in Petrograd; her desk was full of his letters. She had not seen him since he had left her at Ricksville the night of Fred's disappearance. It was Atkinson's letter which had sent Herrick out into the night to meet death.

Before ringing for Senator Atkinson to be shown up, downstairs in the morning-room which she had made her boudoir, she waited a few moments.

The room was the creation of an Englishwoman, who had leased her house to Mrs. Herrick for the term of the war. The curved windows, full of growing flowers and plants, looked out on Carlton Terrace. The walls were wood, painted an ivory white, with family portraits set in the panels. The portrait over the chimney, by Reynolds, of Frederick Cecil Clarence Dunston, a round-faced, blue-eyed baby in white frock with red sash, holding a rabbit in his arms, Jessica imagined resembled little Fred. She adored the picture and pointed out the boy to her son, whose grandfather had been an oil king and whose grandmother had been a cook.

The deep delightful chairs and sofas, and the curtains over windows and doors, glowed and flowered in brilliant tones of blue and red, and across the cream linen a gorgeous peacock spread his tail. Jessica had filled vases of Chinese porcelain with yellow roses, and against the warmth and bloom in her nursing dress, Atkinson when he came in saw her standing near to a desk in whose drawers were at least a hundred of his own letters.

"There, let me look at you! Don't move!"

And he came over to her, rushing, would have taken her in his arms; but she did not greet him and he waited hesitatingly. As Jessica put out her hand he crushed it.

"Henry, if I had known, I would have stopped your coming."

"You couldn't have stopped my coming, Jessica. You have replied to my letters without answering them."

"I know. They were very hard to answer."

"I have written you, written you. I have been pouring out my heart to you ever since the night we parted. When I got your letter telling me about what happened in the South, I was in the interior of Russia, surrounded by dangers; but I sat up all night just as I was, with that letter in my hand, hardly moved from my chair. It was terrible, Jessica, terrible."

"You must never speak of it."

She took a chair near him, leaned her arm on the back and her cheek against it.

"It's only a few years since we parted, Jess. Every beat of my heart, every pulse of my body, are all for you! I have had honors. . . ." he touched his left breast. "The State Department of Washington will give me what I want; I can do what I like. But I only care for what it can mean for you."

He drank her in with eyes that had been full of her since they parted. She was as slender as a girl, almost too thin; her hair was hidden under her white cap. She had grown richer, more beautiful.

"I am leaving tomorrow for France and then I am going to Poland on the Food Commission. Today I see the King, scarcely a moment free. You see I am a soldier, and you know I am doing all I can. . . . But I want you to know. . . ."

She had not spoken. Now she turned quickly, put out her hand and laid it on his knee for a second and then withdrew it.

"Henry, I don't know what is the matter with me," she said, almost appealingly, "I am evidently not to be counted on at all in matters of feeling."

Atkinson interrupted her. "Oh, you did care, Jessica! You cared in New York. You never can make me believe anything else."

She said honestly: "I thought I did, but I would have gone with you if I had loved you." She linked her hands together tightly and said in a low tone: "Don't you see how terrible it is for Fred to have gone to his death because he thought something was true that was a lie? As long as I live," she said passionately, "I shall never get over that horror."

Atkinson put both his hands over hers and held them strongly. Her eyes were full of tears. She nodded, shaking them away.

"It seems so frightful to think of Fred worshipping me, trusting me like God in high Heaven; fighting with himself to get clean and right; and then to find and read a lie and to go to death . . . for it!" She was trembling with the emotion on her face of pity and mercy.

He had always thought hers the most remarkable beauty he had ever seen.

"It was *not* a lie then," he said stoutly. "I loved you and I wanted you and you have been near . . . near to me."

She interrupted. "I was restless. Ever since I was eighteen I've wanted special things — Love and a child."

Now Atkinson, watching her, saw how she became alight with motherhood and he felt her withdraw her hands. Jess folded them across her beautiful breast, ample, rich, perfect and now maternal, as though she folded those passionate, desirous arms, made for a man's delight, across the secrets of her holy maternity. He murmured:

"I forgot the child."

Her face was at once smiles and softness. "He is such a darling! You said, you know, that I ought to be the mother of fine children, Henry!"

Atkinson put out his hand and caught the thick folds of the blooming chintz that hung over the door, and crushed it in his fingers.

"When I was a girl," she said, "up in Maine, I fell in love with a boy of my own age. We were parted and I married Fred without loving him — you know that — and I never heard from the boy again, never, although I saw him once for a minute at Nora Langforde's just when you and I seemed to be . . ." and she hesitated, to choose the words " . . . meant for each other."

Atkinson started forward.

"Jessica!"

But Mrs. Herrick shook her head. "We were *not*

meant for each other and I knew it in the South. Now I am free." She waited a moment and Atkinson saw her face change for the second time, transformed at her child's name and now again, all light and sweetness, mobile, more maddeningly lovely than ever. "The boy has come back."

"And you are going to marry him?"

"If he asks me, yes."

Jessica realized that he had stumbled out of the room without bidding her goodby. She heard the door shut under the portiere, the soft thick sound of several inches thick of mahogany well set in its casing. She heard the click of the brass lock.

She waited a few moments, standing there under the picture of Frederick Cecil Dunston, perfectly motionless. Then her eyes fell on a small toy lamb, standing meek and appealing by a small low chair, and there was a whip on the floor, little objects waiting for the small child. Her expression was intensely sad and troubled and full of pain for the pain she had given again.

Burke, her first parlor-maid, opened the door. Burke looked like other London maids at the time who had taken the places of footmen; she was in uniform of bright blue, with a smart cap and apron.

"Will you have tea here, Madam?"

Jessica sank into the chair which Atkinson had left and put her arm across her eyes.

"Ring for the car. I shall go straight to the hospital as soon as I've had tea."

But the tea things were taken away and still Jessica did not leave the chintz boudoir. She forbade Burke to let any one know she was in the house and gave herself

leisure not to rest, but to remember the past, which Atkinson's visit had brought back forcibly to her mind.

Her life with Fred was always knocking at her door, asking to be remembered. Atkinson had made her remember the Southern cottage and her life there with Fred before the accident; and she forgot London and was only Jessica Herrick back in the South. . . .

The night she had found Atkinson's letter pinned on her cushion and knew that Fred had left her, she telephoned to the New York house, prepared a wire to Fred in New York to send in the morning, written to him with Nellie kneeling by her side, whilst her own maid slept. She had prepared her things to go north.

Jessica would have quietly broken the news to her husband that she loved Atkinson and that she was going away with him forever if such a thing had been true, and if she had loved another man. But that Fred should rush out of her life for a lie, that after his splendid fight for decency and his victory he should be struck in the face by this, was horrible to her. She could not bear it.

She had not gone north next morning; no trains had left for twenty-four hours for the north. The hideous news of the accident and Fred's disappearance struck her down like a blow and very nearly killed her.

One morning a fortnight later, when she was still too weak to leave her bed, Nora Langforde had come in, taken her in her arms.

"You are coming with me, my dear. You are only one woman in millions who have lost their husbands and you are coming with me to try to do something for some of the others."

Jessica sailed for England a month after the accident,

and the Old World opened its arms to her and took her in to its suffering heart.

She adored London. Here were traditions, here were richness and beauty, atmosphere, background; and here, in the finest work a woman can do, caring for those who suffer, she could forget herself, immerse herself in the needs of the time.

She had come to London in April, 1915; in November Frederick Tryst Herrick was born in the sympathetic house. Her own health was so magnificent, her physique so normal, that the bearing of her child was scarcely more than an incident.

She organized her hospital, directed and ran it and made it the model in every way.

And all around her, harmonious and beautiful, London lay, dark and mysterious at night under the menace and the peril; agitated, sombre, majestic in the daytime, full of magnetism and beauty to this girl of another country, with the echo of the Old World in her soul.

Every now and then Fred's image would cross her absorbing day and she would push it aside, crushing it out with her duties. In New York, before she sailed, an Irish priest had come to see her. He had been the last person to see Herrick in the dawn the day after the accident, and by the words of the Irishman an ineffaceable picture of her husband had been drawn for Jessica. She saw him struggle with the waves, fight fire and save human lives. The priest had marked Herrick for the last time jumping a mass of burning wreckage, had seen him disappear and after that nothing had been found of him in that mass of horrors.

"He was," the priest had said to her, "the bravest man, Madam, the most miserable, that I have ever seen. He wanted to die; I wanted him to live. But God took him."

Jessica might be proud for her son of his father's end. And the little son was the image of his father. Fred lived again in him. There was a simplicity, a confiding adoration of her in the child which gave her at times terrible pangs, as though Fred lived in him and appealed to her not to forget him. Work and motherhood had enriched her beauty, experience had deepened her beauty, made it more appealing.

She had thrown herself full length on a sofa, pillows all around her, in front of the curved window with its gracefully hanging vines and its blooming plants. She relaxed, let herself rest in this home that she had made for herself in England. The smell of the honeysuckle on the porch of her Southern shooting-lodge must not make her drowsy with its perfume. . . . And the South slipped away and in its stead she remembered the Fortune Bay picnic and the boy Brian, who had kissed her, and the moonlit shore around the old Red House, and Brian round the curve.

When she had seen him that night at Nora Langforde's house in New York it had been thrilling, but unreal; he had not come back to her then. For months there had been a restless stirring in her which she could not quiet, a restlessness which her hospital routine did not destroy or even dull. It was the rebellion of millions of women in war-time, when their men are far and their incomplete lives beat incessantly on the arid shore of separation.

Jessica wanted love with all her senses and with

all her heart. She was tremendously alive, keen and vital, and over and over again came to her the heavenly remembrance of her day with Brian O'More and her first kiss.

The week before she had been standing in the linen-room door when an officer had come in and inquired the way to a certain ward, and as she answered she saw that it was Brian. They had spent only half an hour together — she had taken him in her motor — and in that short half hour, with ardent fingers that exchanged the electric correspondence, had taken up their broken threads.

As he left her at Euston Station he almost took her in his arms. Seeing him, as Lady Sylvia saw him to be, the most beautiful of men, she felt that all the ways of her life had led her to just this day.

* * *

"I say, are you here, dearest?"

Nora Langforde pushed open the curtained door of the chintz boudoir. Jessica stirred and sighed, half sitting up. She made a place on the lounge for Nora.

"I just popped in for a moment, Jessica, to see what had happened to you. I searched the hospital from the operating room to the cellar and no one could tell me where you had gone. Your telephone is off."

"It is," said Jessica. "I put it off."

Mrs. Langforde wore the outdoor uniform of the St. John's Ambulance nurse.

"Well, you won't put *me* off so easily, Jess. Whom do you think I ran into? — Senator Atkinson, looking like a haunted house. What *have* you done to him?"

Mrs. Herrick did not answer and Mrs. Langforde had another subject nearer her heart.

"Jessica darling, Brian goes back to France tomorrow."

Mrs. Langforde saw the pallor that crept over Jessica's face.

"Jessica, I have known him since he was at Eton. He is a wonder. There is no one like Brian. He has the soul of a poet and the heart of a soldier." Mrs. Langforde put her hands firmly over Jessica's. "You must forgive me. I care for you, but I care for him, too, a lot! I don't know any one except my own man I love so dearly."

Jessica's eyelids flickered.

"I can't have you turning his face into the mask I saw Senator Atkinson's wear."

Jessica started up. "You don't know what you say."

"He is restless, Jess, imaginative, a poet . . . and if you sent him away badly, Jess. . . ."

Mrs. Herrick raised her head and looked Nora Langforde fully in the face. Nora Langforde looked at her intently, then bent over and kissed her.

"I am going up to see the baby, then I'll let myself out and you won't know I'm gone. If I don't run up now I'll meet Brian on the stairs."

CHAPTER IV

"You know how a woman feels about an only son."

"I am beginning to know."

"Back of Brian are the traditions of two lines of ancient families."

"I have often thought about tradition, Lady Sylvia."

"I'm rather surprised that Brian ever spoke of family. We've always thought him a most awful democrat."

"Brian has never mentioned his ancestors to me. I mean, I wondered what the best traditions are."

Along the western terrace, which Brian O'More liked the best of the outer stonework of the Castle, long shadows of lindens fell; the sunlight, still warm and comforting, glowed on the old stones like blood; the windows at the back of the women reddened as though crimson curtains had fallen in front of the panes. Stepping from shadow into red light and back again into shadow, with his small sandalled feet, little Fred Herrick was playing by himself, a game of "step and step and back again" understood only by children!

The sturdy child, in linen knickers and tunic, bare-legged, bare-throated, bare-armed, with bright hair like a crown of light, was a magnet to the eyes of both women. Lady Sylvia saw Brian at four years old, soldiering up and down this western terrace, stepping as Fred Herrick, Second, stepped across the sun-blood.

The boy was hourly more passionately absorbing to his mother.

"I've been thinking about tradition in regard to little Fred."

Jessica's voice, quick, eager, warm with feeling and rich in timbre, was a contrast to the more cadenced, indolent tones of Lady Sylvia.

Mrs. Herrick clasped her hands around her knees, turned her head with its lifted chin toward Lady Sylvia. The red light fell far from her, only on the figure of the older woman.

Every word of the strange woman's, every pose and inflection, every attitude of body and mind, were subjects of interest and study, of approval and disapproval. Jessica had been a guest at O'More Castle for a week and she was conscious that the Englishwoman was trying to like her, to think her worthy to be Brian's wife.

"I've been wondering what will be the very best things to give to little Fred, the best sort of ideals and background to prepare for him, because," she unconsciously straightened in the pride of being the mother of a man child, "I've always thought that a mother had a tremendous influence on her son." She made a graceful gesture towards the velvet beauty of the park. "We haven't anything like this in our fresh young country . . . and no ancestors." She gave a little laugh. "Nevertheless, I want to be able to talk to little Fred about traditions."

Lady Sylvia cringed sensitively. She did not dare broach the subject of forebears for these crude American citizens.

Jessica's face was fully turned to her.

"She is lovely to look at — there's no possible denying it. Her hands and wrists, her feet and her figure, all show *race*."

"Brian hasn't talked to me about his family," said the American, "but I know what it is. I know what all this ancient beauty means, and how proud you are and should be of it all, and of his people before him, and yours. . . . But he has told you all about my family, hasn't he? . . . I know he has."

Jessica could not see the deeper color that came up in Lady Sylvia's cheek. She rose rather abruptly.

"Come before the dusk finds us, won't you? It's chilly then. Let us go in. You want to see Brian's part of the Castle, don't you? Brian's rooms when he was a boy are now just as they were then, and you said you wanted to see them."

Little Fred, as they rose, came toward them holding out his hands with the little fists clenched, as though he concealed treasures.

"I've caught the red light, Mummie. Hold your hands, I'll give it to you."

And then as Jessica, smiling, held out her hands to him, he shook his head with a child's caprice and ran to Lady Sylvia. As he ran to her, she bent over quickly and lifted him. He appealed to her. She had taken a woman's unreasoning liking to the boy, far beyond any possible interest she could ever feel in the mother.

"I'll give the red light to you," he said. "See! I'll put it all here," and he pressed his hands against her breast as she held him, laughing and kissing his curls and head.

Walking before her guest to show her the way, up the

many stairs, through little corridors and broken stairways, winding, turning, to the western wing of the Castle, where Brian O'More had his rooms, Lady Sylvia said to herself:

"This is a pilgrimage through O'More Castle which I really never foresaw! I never pictured myself showing darling Brian's — blessed boy! — rooms and treasures to another woman."

From the hour when England declared war, when she knew that Brian would go among the first, until this night her heart had never been at rest. She had never slept an hour's sleep without a weight on her breast. She had never sat down to a meal, or gone from one room to another, without the wonder in her heart: "Will it be? Shall I hear it, sometime — that message that the other women have heard? Or shall I have him again, safe until the natural end of men?"

Over and over again since Brian had been fighting, she had come up to these old rooms of his and installed herself for hours with her work, with a book, living over his life again here, writing to him here, on his old desk, burnt with carelessly-put-down cigarette ends, spattered with ink, notched, even scribbled into, for he had begun to write on it when he was ten years old. It was closed now; she had locked it.

Standing now with one hand on it, caressing the polished wood gently, she looked up at Jessica Herrick, half smiling.

"This is his old desk. It belonged to his great-grandfather, and I daresay . . ."

Lady Sylvia met the situation like the true sport that she was. Looking into the charming face of the woman

who would be some day mistress of O'More Castle, and who stood there so gracefully and, in a measure, so humbly, without seeming in the least to take any possession or even to evince any curiosity, she said:

"I daresay Brian has written many a bit of verse to you at this desk . . . and letters."

The warmth of the long Irish twilight filled the low-ceilinged room which O'More had occupied at the Castle since he was a schoolboy, on holiday visits to his grandfather. The sun had gone down over the reddened sea, but the heat lingered, and the sunny, open rooms welcomed the two women as they came up together along the steps separating the tower from the corridors. For the first time since Mrs. Herrick's arrival, Brian's mother appeared to lay down her arms. She had left this pilgrimage until the last and in bringing Jessica here she accepted her.

"Look, this little bit of the Castle is all Brian. He hasn't changed really since he was a lad, home from Eton. It was all outdoors for Brian as long as there was light, and he never cared where he dropped down with a book, or to write, if the corner were a quiet one and he could look at the sea." Lady Sylvia pointed out of the long low window, under which ran a comfortable seat stacked with worn, faded, chintz-covered pillows. One could fancy the long form of the Irish soldier outstretched there an hour before. Everything had lately known the master and the rooms, long lived in, seemed inhabited, waiting. Lady Sylvia had let nothing be disturbed.

"Those are his Varsity caps and flags, and I believe," she said, with a faint smile, "that Brian rowed in the

crew that very summer he went over to the States."

But to Jessica the mother made her pilgrimage alone. Lady Sylvia turned to Mrs. Herrick, once laid her slender fingers on Jessica's arm as she showed the books lining the walls — Brian's poets. But never once did Jessica feel herself to be any part in it all, or share the memories between mother and son.

In the little room where Brian kept golf clubs, cricket bats, rackets, and where along the walls hung his sporting rifles and trophies of the North woods game, her mind made a leaping journey to the South — to Fred Herrick's gun-room, his rifles and shot guns. She thought of her own man, game sport that he was, first-rate all-round sportsman! And these masculine belongings brought Fred back as nothing else could have done.

Lady Sylvia, as though the rooms were a museum of fine arts, where every object was a treasure, indicated Brian's little belongings and possessions, and her usually cold and formal speech seemed a constant caress.

On the table were photographs of Brian's father in uniform, the poor captain who had had little to do with titles and fortunes. There were photographs of Lord O'More. And on the dear little old desk was a full-length photograph of Jessica's portrait, signed. She had given it to Brian in London. In riding clothes, crumpled gloves in hands, Fred's wedding ring on her finger, Jessica Herrick looked out steadily to this little tower-room of an Irish castle. What was she doing here?

Lady Sylvia had been wondering where a certain photograph was. She had not been up here since Brian's last leave; she had not felt like seeking these beloved little rooms since Brian had told her that he was in love with Jessica and going to marry.

The light faded, and Lady Sylvia turned to Brian's bedroom, separated from the study again by quaint steps of polished oak.

The mother went up the steps into the unpretentious bedroom, severe in its simplicity, and filled with the warm sea air coming in through the open windows. Over on a little table by Brian's bed Lady Sylvia saw the photograph which she had missed and went toward it eagerly. From the study at the foot of the steps Jessica could see the small bedroom, deserted, lonely, expressive and appealing, but, as the other had done, strongly recalling her husband's lonely apparition. She had never gone into his rooms without feeling, with a pang of self-reproach, how desolate they were, knowing better than any one how uncompanied Fred had been and how "sick his life was of lonely sleep."

Lady Sylvia called over her shoulder: "This has been Brian's bed since he was ten years old. I used to come up here and tuck him in when he was home from school."

But Mrs. Herrick felt that she had no place there. Lady Sylvia had taken up the little photograph of herself as a young mother, holding in her arms her infant son.

"Mis' Herrick, honey!"

Nellie had made her way through the many turnings of the old house to the distant quarters of Captain O'More. Now the negress stood in the door of the study, half apologetic, but as usual wholly determined.

"Mis' Herrick, ma'am! De lile fellar's powerful mischeevous tonight! He 'clars he won't go to sleep nohow twell you'll come 'n sing his 'Marchin' thro' Georgia.'"

A little shamefacedly, in acknowledgment of her inefficiency to quiet the spoiled only child, Nellie waited, expecting a reprimand.

But Jessica went forward eagerly.

"I'll come to baby, Nellie — I'll come."

She glanced back at Lady Sylvia, who, with the photograph in her hand, pored over it as though she was reading it with her soul's eyes. Without even taking leave Jessica softly followed the colored woman, with a sense of relief, and sure that she would not be missed.

And like this each of the women went to her son.

CHAPTER V

It was long past nine o'clock when Jessica went to find Lady Sylvia in the intimate room known as the "Chinese breakfast-room" and where now in war-time Lady Sylvia had all her meals served.

Lady Sylvia was late in coming down and Jessica waited, standing in the long, wide-open window, giving on the park and pond. The walls of the room were exquisite examples of eighteenth-century Chinese lacquer set in mouldings of dull gold. And in the center of the room a small table, almost severe in its simplicity, but shining with the O'More silver and charming with its decorations of yellow dahlias, waited for the two women.

Lady Sylvia had cut out every possible luxury in her household. To her the hours meant only the passing of the time until Brian's next leave or a blessed end of the war. She received no one, gave herself entirely to the war-work in Belfast, and ate only enough to keep her soul in her slender body.

Jessica had left her in the early twilight and since leaving her she had traversed one of those important roads in her own destiny which had led her to a definite point. Over the road which she had journeyed mentally during the last three hours she would never return.

She had put little Fred to sleep by singing to him the old negro songs. He had gone to sleep with his arms around her neck and she had unwound them and laid him down to go to prepare for dinner.

It seemed to her that all the useless vestures which her soul had ever worn had slipped from her that night in the blue guest-room of O'More Castle, where she was ostensibly as the coming Lady O'More.

No appealing memories and thoughts of Brian O'More had come back with her from his rooms in O'More Castle, but trenchant and striking memories of her own husband. She could not think of any one but Fred.

With a sensitive horror of mental suffering, Jessica had tried from the very first not to let herself brood and linger over the disaster, physical and moral, of it all. For the sake of the child who was going to be born, she had tried to keep herself sane and normal; and it was not, strange to say, until here on this night in Castle O'More that she spoke out honestly and frankly to her own soul and to her own self.

Whilst dressing for this little intimate dinner with this strange, cold woman who, she was conscious, did not care for her greatly, who could at best only tolerate her, she re-lived, with a full permission to her thoughts to express themselves, the last weeks of her life with her husband.

Why had she been so strong at Ricksville? Why had she been able to refuse Henry Atkinson everything, to let him go? Why? Because her own husband was taking hold of her life for the first time, because she was beginning to be interested in Fred Herrick as a man and a companion.

Then the coming of the little child, the fact that the little boy was the expression of their union and that he bore so undoubtedly a striking resemblance to Herrick, and that she loved to see Fred's ways in him. Little

Fred's adoration of his mother, his chivalry to her, his unchildlike unselfishness, spoiled though he was — it was Fred all over again.

And Jessica was so just and so honorable that it was unbearable to her to think that her husband should have gone to his death not knowing that he was to be a father, and believing a hideous lie about herself and another man.

It seemed that she could never, if she had been given the chance, have done enough to make it up to this defrauded man. But it was too late!

She became, as she mused and returned to her married life, exalted to that sentimental pitch which all sensitive women reach when they really love — the desire to show by sacrifice to the beloved the force and reality of their passion. . . . She could do nothing for a living Fred Herrick, but she could do something for his memory, which appeared to be so miraculously living and so full of the elements which go to make an ardent and vital feeling.

Was it too late?

In this Irish land, new to her and very sympathetic and charming, and here at O'More Castle itself, Jessica had felt a mysterious and poignant certitude that her husband was in the land of the living. Here in the blue guest-room this night she faced the feeling and allowed it to form itself, and did not shirk its possibilities.

"I believe that Fred Herrick is alive," she said to herself, putting one of the great yellow Gloire de Dijon roses at the breast of her white linen blouse. She had not discarded her uniform once for an evening dress, even here. "And whether Fred is living or lying at the bottom of that dreadful river, I care for him."

Waiting for Lady Sylvia in the long window of the Chinese room she repeated the words to herself, with her eyes on the soft, misty beauty of the Irish park in the moonlight.

"I care for Fred and I would give my very life if he could know it, wherever he is, wherever he is."

Lady Sylvia came in with a letter from Brian in her hand. She broke the spell. The little thin sheet of letterpaper, written with pencil, the unstamped envelope, officers' mail, her face, her smile, her excitement, broke the spell. There were two letters from Brian to his mother and nothing from the front for Jessica. Her post went to Carlton Terrace and she was glad; she was relieved that nothing came to her here tonight from any man.

"Has Brian told you much about Major Hounslow? I expect, as a matter of fact, that Brian has talked to you of other things. But to me his letters are full of this man and when he was home he told me a lot about him."

Lady Sylvia took up the letter and began to read:

"I'm afraid you'll be fed up with Hounslow, Mater, but he's so jolly. I wish we'd known each other as lads. He's attached now to the General Staff and he's going on up with us into Flanders. There's no one like Bill Hounslow; he's so big-minded, so clean-windowed. Next week he gets a leave and he's going to pop in to O'More Castle and look you up. You'll put him up, I know, if only just to talk about me to him. He doesn't know I'm going to be married, or, in point of fact, anything about Jess, so don't mention it, Mater."

Lady Sylvia raised her eyes from the letter to Mrs. Herrick.

"And then he goes on to talk about the . . . I'll let you read the rest for yourself," she said, "after dinner."

"It seems," Lady Sylvia went on, "that this Hounslo w has had a most extraordinary career. Brian says that he volunteered as a common soldier in the British Forces in 1915. He was raised in the ranks several times for astonishing bravery and, finally, when you Americans came in in 1917, Captain Hounslo w went into his own army, for he is an American. Now Brian writes me that he is attached to the British Staff as liaison officer. He is the greatest friend that Brian has made during the war — and, fancy! I shall see him! How splendid it will be to be able to talk of Brian with him!"

Across the small table from Lady Sylvia, Jessica Herrick was miles and miles away. The soldier's letters and his messages, the mention of his comrade, the prospective coming of a soldier who could bring them news of the man fighting — all were dim to her. She was hearing Lady Sylvia through a singular daze and dullness. Her mind was full of Fred, of the days in the South; the warm sweet night air coming in with the moonlight was full of the tang and the resin of the pines.

"One can never tell when these poor dears will be coming," Lady Sylvia was saying. "Brian's letter is already ten days old. Major Hounslo w may come tomorrow. . . . Yes, I think it should be tomorrow." She looked eagerly at Jessica, already a pitiful jealousy in her heart, ever ready to stir when the thought of the other woman was present. It would be Jessica who would listen with her to these stories of Brian!

"I'm afraid," Mrs. Herrick said, in her quick, charming voice, "that I shan't see Major Hounslo w. I'm so sorry, but I shall have to go back to London tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? But, my dear, you haven't paid me

your promised week's visit! You can't go tomorrow."

It had become imperative to Jessica to get away. She had to be alone with herself and by herself. Here with Brian's mother, with his letters, with these surroundings, she could not make her decision or see things clearly.

Only on the ship, while it still lay at Southampton harbor, did Jessica bring herself to write to Brian. She had known what she wanted to say the night when she stood in his rooms at O'More Castle and saw his mother bending over the little photograph. But she had not been able to write the letter.

At one of the little tables in the ship's library Jessica wrote to Brian, and the envelope went to the Flanders front from Southampton, and she sailed back to her own country, free.

"Dear Brian:

When you get this letter I shall be on my way to the United States. I am going to the South, to the old place where I was when my husband left me. I know you will think it strange that I could write to you these things when you are fighting. But between us there must not be any more untruth. Until I come back from America there must be nothing between us.

"But, Brian, there is really too much between us, and will be for ever! Fred is there, my husband. I have grown to understand that I cared for him as much and more than I can ever care for any other man. I must have loved him for a long time and was too stupid and proud to understand it. Try to forgive me.

"If he ever comes back I should go to him; I'd walk over flames and ditches. I know now that I love my husband. I think that perhaps at home I'll find some traces of him.

"You must let me go, Brian. I must make this quest. If after a long, long time he does not come back and you want me, then I will marry you.

"Then, there is my little boy. He links me to his father. I am a one man's woman, Brian. I am sure that I can only give myself once. Your mother was kind; Ireland is beautiful; but I have no part here and don't belong to it. I am American. My youth, my traditions and my child and my husband are part of my own country. Let me go to them, Brian, and forgive me."

CHAPTER VI

Herrick had come back to London in 1918, transferred from the Royal Fusiliers to the First Battalion of Heavy Tanks, commissioned to transport his men from England to Flanders.

During the early months of the war he had had no leave and therefore when an enforced leave finally came, he found that he enjoyed it to a wonderful extent. He spent it in France in an old chateau of Limousin, and quartered there with him was a young Irishman, Captain Brian O'More. Repose came as a sort of heaven to them both and O'More, who had begun early in life to like Americans, took a tremendous fancy to this man. Herrick's simplicity, his scorn for all but the real things, was sympathetic to the imaginative soldier-poet. The pink hills of Limousin recalled Ireland to O'More and he told his friend fascinating stories about County Cork and his old home, as they shot together over French preserves, or lunched in the chateau's historic library amongst ancient manuscripts and delightful books.

The Irish nobleman and the American citizen grew to be fast friends, without either man giving himself away to the other regarding his sentimental life. Indeed, they talked of everything but women. Brian O'More had the subtle reserve of the Irishman, and no more modest or impersonal creature ever walked the earth than Frederick Herrick. It would never have occurred to him to have spoken of his unhappy married life, and

at the time Major Hounslow went over to England, to take over the tanks, Captain O'More, attached to the First Battalion Heavy Tanks, was busy training the men on Salisbury Plain.

Fred was always wondering whether some strange trick of fate would not cross his path with Jessica's. He never came into Paris or went where people were — mingled with the crowds in the streets, or passed a woman in uniform, without thinking that it might be his wife.

At first he had dreaded such an encounter. He avoided London. But now of late he had been letting himself long and hope to see her; he could not get her out of his mind, and a yearning in him for her had been in his heart for some time past, with its living pain.

Captain O'More had insisted that Hounslow spend his next leave in Ireland with Lady Sylvia, and Herrick had accepted, thinking that he would like to see the country from which his wife's people had come, and remembering Jessica's adoration for Ireland. He cut women out of his life; he had not tasted a drop of liquor since he had volunteered in London. No man went into battle with a cleaner body or a straighter soul than Herrick. He was detached. He did not seek death, but he was quite prepared to meet it. He could not understand the charmed life he seemed to bear. He was adored by his men, one of those commanding officers for whom any man in his regiment would have laid down his life.

* * *

There was no one to meet Fred at the little station where the train put him down. He had come several days

earlier than he was expected, arriving before the despatch which he had sent to O'More Castle from Paris. He refused the offer of a side car, to drive him to O'More. He wanted to walk; asked his direction and followed it, sorry that it was only five miles.

The day was divine and the balm of the Irish air touched his face like a gentle caress. He already found Ireland fascinating and had felt its charm ever since his steamer touched the quay. The strain under which they had been all summer, the confident feeling that the end was near, the horror of attack and retreat, of offensive and counter-offensive, and now the excitement of the German retreat, all culminated in great tension to nerves and body, and Herrick was glad to get out of the anguish for a short time. It was short, for he had refused to take more than a few days' leave.

It was heavenly to be here in this Enchanted Island — less personal to the war than the other countries, removed, unscarred by invasion, it seemed a little jewel on the sea's breast.

Ever since he had put out from England on this quest of rest and relief, he had begun to think of Jess as he had not thought of her since the Georgia days. He would surely, surely find her again one day! *He would see his child.* His very veins were full of Jessica, and he went back to her with a rush that made him tingle every time he thought of her. Now here in Ireland she seemed wonderfully near. The musical voices of the people made him think of Jessica's voice; their soft speech recalled the accent she had never lost; he looked into every pair of blue eyes to see if there were eyes like hers in County Cork.

Down in the South they had used to walk miles together, when she swung along beside him, light as a feather, bright as air — a wonderful companion for an out-of-door man.

Now, as Herrick cut from the little village into the open, he made his way along the high road towards the hills westward, Jessica seemed to keep pace with him, to walk along by his side.

Ah, where was she really? What man's life was she making wretched or divine? And the little child? He would be nearly three years old. He had long ago let the idea that the child was Atkinson's die the death, and thought of him as his own living son, whom some day he must see and know.

The land that rose and dipped, the charm and beauty of this fairylike country, won him more at every mile. He swung along up a hill, thinking how soon to see O'More Castle, and stopped to look back at the little villages the valley held, like warm little nests. The light was peculiarly soft and exquisite and as he climbed a hillock, as though a veil were suddenly lifted, he came out on to the entrancing Vale of Dare. Below him, winding sheenily, starry-like, the little river Lavon poured its silver through the valley. On all sides the gorse rolled up like gold, as though pyramids of fairy guineas had been spilled over the land. Farther on stretched the purple of the heather until it seemed as though royal cloaks had been dropped by the Irish Kings before they went out in glory. The seduction and charm wrapped the soldier around like a delicious mantle. So full of enchantment it all was that Fred, brought out from the noise of shells and barrage, from things too

terrible to contemplate, seemed suddenly transported into a paradise. He went on past hamlet and farm, up hill and through the little cup-like vales, past the bogs with the cotton-wood blossoms lying like snow over the rich brown peat. He could hardly believe that the high, high fuchsia hedges stained with crimson, tipped with royal purple, could be true. They might have been called into being by some fairy, in their extravagant color and richness.

From a little height he caught sight for a moment of Castle O'More, and though Brian had told him how it would be, he had expected a grey, impressive mansion. This sight broke in upon his dream of Jess. He had forgotten that he was a man on leave, simply going to find a bit of home peace for a while. He had only been thinking of his need of the woman.

Now before him in the distance, was this vision of home. A snow-white house, with Georgian columns, a Palladian house, large, homelike, hospitable-looking, bright and shining against the green.

Then he lost sight of it again in a dip of the hills, and finally came up to the gates, supporting two great shields of the O'More arms, and saw them banked and surrounded by tree-like bushes of rhododendrons, and through their open iron portals the long, leaf-covered avenue stretching away indefinitely under lines of golden beeches.

He gazed enchanted into the golden world in its dress of autumn yellow, and as he entered, without meeting a human soul, he startled the rabbits who scuttled across the road in front of him under his feet and heard the pheasants clucking in the golden coverts of the wide

sweeping park. It was beautiful beyond believing, and he apparently was alone in it. He walked fully two miles or more down the drive, under the close shadowing beeches.

He was well on towards the house when he realized that he was a stranger going to meet strange people. Herrick, indeed, thought about himself so little at all times that when he found himself face to face with his own personality, it gave him a shock. He was thinking of Jessica intensely and would not have been surprised to have found her here at Castle O'More. He was musing: "It's sure to come some time. How will it be? How shall I meet it?"

Within a short distance from the house he came upon a small figure standing well in the middle of the drive — the white figure of a little child, marching, with a head as gold as the leaves, barelegged, bare-armed, sandals on his little feet. He was marching, chin up, a tiny gun in his hand. Serious, absorbed in his soldier game, he came bravely towards the officer.

Soldiers, soldiers everywhere, all over the face of Europe! Blue and grey and brown — all soldiers! And this small thing, hardly blossomed on the earth, was part of the soldier game.

He came forward towards Herrick without hesitation or fear, carrying his little gun.

"Hallo!" He came up to Herrick. "*You're* a German."

"Not on your life!"

The boy spoke well and clearly, with a high assured ring in his voice; his eyes were Irish-blue eyes. Fred Herrick stood still and saluted and the child saluted gravely.

Where, where had Fred seen that beautiful humorous mouth? Where a deep-set chin like that? And those fearless, starlike eyes?

"March with me," said the little boy, "march by my side."

He came about as high as Herrick's knee, about as high as to the knee of his boots. But Fred Herrick stood still, white to the lips, staring at the little half-naked figure, with his bright hair and his uplifted face.

"What is your name?" He could hardly bring the words to his lips.

"Sonny Boy," said the soldier nonchalantly. "But there is a whole lot more soldiers all hiding down there in the woods." He pointed with his little finger.

Then Fred saw a nurse, sitting sewing peacefully among the fallen leaves, her back to him. She was a big stout woman, with a generous figure. She was all in white. She was bending over her mending. The little boy ran to her, and Fred Herrick heard him cry:

"Nelly! Nelly! Here is a real soldier."

And the black woman, for she was as black as the ace of spades, got up with wonderful ease for so stout a person and came towards them, across the little distance.

When she was close and saw Fred Herrick standing rigid in the road, she stopped, stared, until the whites of her eyes seemed all that was visible in her face. Then she hurried forward, stumbling, hardly able to walk. And Fred Herrick, moveless, stared at her, waiting for this tremendous break in life to occur, for a great mark to run across his history.

Nelly reached him. She fell down on her knees at his feet; she clasped his boots around with her arms, as a

slave in 1860 might have done to a good master.

"Gawd! Gawd! Gawd of battles! Gawd Almighty! Master Frayde! Oh, my Lord, oh, my Lord!"

He lifted her half roughly, touched that she should have knelt like this and trembling almost as she trembled. He had not shook like this at Bapaume or in any field.

The little soldier stood by, scared, but curious, and the bright apple-red of his cheeks faded a little.

"Nelly! See here, brace up, buck up! Come, that's a good girl!"

Nelly had last seen her master pinning his note on Jessica's cushion in her bedroom, when he had rushed past the negress and out of the house.

Now Fred caught her by the arm and looking into her face, he asked:

"Nelly, is that . . . ?"

Without answering him directly, the woman turned to the little boy and said quickly:

"See here, you little old Captain, you little old soldier, you go down to the field and shoot some of those cows. They're Germans, boy. Go along with you, Sonny Boy."

The child, his bright head hanging, a little scared and distressed, went slowly, dragging his gun across the road, towards the place where Nelly's sewing lay on the leaves.

"It's little Master Frederick Herrick, sir, your little boy."

"Where is your mistress?"

"Gone to America, sir. She all done sail yesterday."

"*To America!*"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Herrick. Don't yo know anything 'bout her and de great big hospitle and all de great big

work she all's been doin' fo' de blin? She'll be back fo' Christmas. She'll be back fo' Christmas."

The negress was an appealing and pathetic figure as she stood before her master with her black hands clasped. Her heart was full of anguish. This was the return she had believed in with her highly-developed spirituality and her prophetic soul. She started forward, as though she were going to bring the little boy back, but Herrick held her.

"Let him go. Don't call him. I couldn't touch him and go back to France! Leave him alone!"

* * *

He stood motionless, watching them go across the golden leaf-covered ground. The soft misty beauty he saw without seeing; to him the whole world was filled by the two figures of the nurse and little boy.

He could not go up to the Castle to see a strange hostess — that was sure! With this decision came a savage longing to catch up in his arms that little object, his son, and carry him away with him forever.

Here the sound of horses' hoofs, scarcely more than a rustle and patter really, made him turn, and a stout Irish pony in a low-hung cart came blithely up. A lady driving alone pulled up short, putting out one hand in its thick glove over the mudguard.

"Major Hounslow, how do you do? I am sure you are *the* man! Awfully glad to welcome you. Lady Sylvia will be distressed that no one should have met you at the station."

He knew her instantly; he had seen her once four years ago.

"I wired from France, but I came faster than my despatch. We never know when we will get our leave."

There was no monstrous bow of tulle under her small chin. Her collar was high and stiff and the tight-fitting tunic showed that she was more frail and slender than when he had seen her in New York. As he looked at her, he was transported back into that day of uncontrolled jealousy when he had followed Jessica to the lobby of the Hotel Plaza.

"How's Brian? Let me look at you a minute," she said. "It is always a new amazement to me, every time I see one of you whole and safe, to think of what you've left back of you up there." Nora Langforde shook a small head back in the direction of those foreign fields. "But it's grand now, isn't it? What a heavenly chase you're having, running after Jerry! Oh," she hardly spoke further than her lips in a tense voice, "it will be over soon, over soon, and you'll *all* be home!"

She was picking out his features, studying him, this Hounslow man who had been made for them a special number by Brian O'More. She was seeing what Brian's wonderful Major Hounslow was really like. This was the man Brian liked better than any chap he had ever met. Nora glanced over from top to toe this big, fine specimen, worn with three years' active service, but decidedly fit in every way and trim as silk. He was a fine figure to meet the world's need for men, a need growing every hour more imperative and terrible. Nora had seen so many maimed and scarred and wretched bodies, so many armless sleeves, so many pitiful faces, that this man was good for the eyes of a woman to rest upon.

Back of him were the two white figures of the nurse and the child. They were making pyramids of the fallen leaves. They could hear Sonny Boy laugh, and the soft musical voice of the colored woman cheering the child on.

Nora was looking at Major Hounslow. She leaned a little bit further over the side of the governess-cart.

("There!" he thought to himself. "Now!")

"But I have seen you before."

It had come!

"I am nothing but a type," he said. "All American officers look like me. A few more or less decorations, that is all."

"I saw you in New York with Jess."

It had come indeed at last, in the alley of O'More. The bell had rung for the music to stop. This was the supreme moment which Fred Herrick had dreaded ever since he had renounced his own identity in the shanty in the Southern forests. He had often wondered about how it would eventually meet him, and asked himself what course he should take when it came. He had nearly lost his life to avoid it, but it couldn't be avoided any longer.

"I saw you with Jess Herrick in the Plaza three years ago. You're not Major Hounslow — you are Frederick Herrick."

She was leaning far over towards him, her eyes fastened upon his face, searching through its grave dignity, its bronze mask of fatigue and strain, to find the full-cheeked, heavy-eyed, dissipated man who had made her friend miserable, and whose disappearance had caused a scandal.

"You *are* Fred Herrick, aren't you?"

All of a sudden it seemed to him that he had done something unworthy and wrong in going away as he had gone. In Nora's eyes there was such a clear challenge, a demand to him to answer boldly and declare himself. He struggled and gave himself up.

"I cannot go to the house now and see strange people. You will have to tell Lady Sylvia whatever you think best. I cannot go up to the house."

Mrs. Langforde wound the reins around the whip and got out of her pony cart. She came over to Fred, looking him up and down from head to foot, as though she picked him out, ticketed and labelled him anew, not as Frederick Herrick, Jessica's unloved husband, "the habitual drunkard," the "rather common man," utterly uninteresting, about whom no one bothered until he disappeared! And look at him as she would, she could not but see him to be a fine figure of a man, with that gray, mysterious look which all the men had who had been looking into the face of death steadily for years. Here he was in flesh and blood, standing in the alley of O'More with Brian back there in the trenches, and Jess and the little boy between!

"*What* a hopeless tangle! And you and Brian friends, comrades!"

He said, "Of course. Why not?" looking at her straightly with his honest eyes.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed. "I see you know nothing whatever about Jess?"

He began really to come back. "I haven't heard anything about her, except to read in the *Graphic* about the boy, since I left her in 1915. I went away then," he said, as though he were cutting his words out

of paper and laying them down before her to read, "I went away then to make room for another chap." He was too real to make an emotional scene. "The whole thing was difficult for me," he said simply. "I went on account of Senator Atkinson."

Nora Langforde put out her hand with her warm Irish impetuosity. The same sudden ardor was in her that was in Jessica.

"I like you," she said quickly. "I liked you that day in New York, and I felt most fearfully about all this wretched muddle between you and Jess. Why, you are worth a hundred Henry Atkinsons! No woman ever knows what is really good for her until she has lost it. Jess was a wreck after your disappearance. I had to fight for her and with her to get her to carry on. Whatever in the world did you do it for? What a mad, crazy way to settle difficulties! Why, why . . . ?"

Herrick repeated: "I told you — on account of Atkinson."

He was so palpably sincere and there was something so appealing about him in his quixotic sacrifice, that Nora Langforde fairly loved him.

"How frightful!" she exclaimed. "Henry Atkinson never counted really in the least."

She threw this out almost casually, reducing Herrick's sacrifice to dust. But before he heard this sentence, Herrick harked back to the one thing that really mattered.

"You say Jess minded my going?"

She nodded. "Minded? Why, it nearly killed her to think you had died, as she thought, and all for a lie!"

Then Herrick seized on this. "A lie? Didn't you see

Atkinson's letter? There was never anything less of a lie than that was."

"If you had only waited! Only waited until she came home! She had been over to Ricksville to meet Atkinson and to send him away indefinitely. She did not care a pin for him. She never did. He was nothing to her. She has only seen him once since then. He never counted in the least."

Herrick threw his head back and exclaimed: "And I nearly died for it! *Never counted!*"

Then he came back and put his big hand down over Nora's, holding hers and looking at her fully. He heard her say:

"How shall I ever tell you? It is like Brian — he is so horribly reserved — it's an Irish failing. . . . Brian and Jess are engaged. They were to have been married at Christmas, but of course . . . now . . ."

"My God!" he exclaimed. "Engaged to O'More? It can't be true!"

He dropped her hand and turned abruptly, and with both his hands thrust in the pockets of his tunic he walked away from her a few steps down the alley, just a few steps away. And Nora waited, knowing that he would come back. She let him speak.

"But it is all right," he said. "Of course, she has believed me dead for three years. What you said was right. I went away like a madman. Things done in passions like that are damn fool things, but men do them." He tried to smile, then said with an effort: "But I daresay this time it does count?" He waited.

Mrs. Langforde bowed her head. "Poor dears!" she said. "They are terribly in love."

She saw the big man meet it without flinching.

"You understand that I have not come back to smash up anything that looks like happiness for Jess. You discovered me," he smiled now more naturally, "I didn't really come back. But we have got to pull the thing off for them in the best way. I have been awfully lucky. I have never run up against a single man who knew me. Instead of joining the United States' forces I have stayed in the British Army to escape detection. I have always been certain that this moment would come sooner or later."

Nora interrupted him.

"It's tragic!" she exclaimed. "It will be a terrible shock for Jess at best, and I don't dare think what it will be for Brian. It is lucky that Jess is in America, but I shall have to cable her."

"We were married in Massachusetts and drunkenness is a legal reason for divorce in that state. But I am afraid," he said quietly, as though he spoke of two strangers in whom he was charitably interested, "I am afraid they cannot be married at Christmas." Then he said, watching Mrs. Langforde's face, "I'm going back, you know, over there. We'll both be in the thickest attacks in the next drive. Don't cable her just yet. Wouldn't it be possible to. . . ."

Mrs. Langforde impulsively put her hand on his arm.

"Stop!" she said. "Please don't speak of anything like that! *Let's just plan for life* — I shall cable her at once."

Here, across the little distance, came the sound of little Fred's laughter and a light broke over Herrick's face.

"You've seen him, Major Hounslow?"

Fred nodded. But wakened, changed, the vibrant man in him stood up and Nora saw him suddenly, not as a discarded husband, or unhappy lover, but as the man of force and activity whom Brian O'More knew. He said quickly:

"Divorce is all right enough — Jess shall have her freedom. *But that's my boy.* Oh, I don't need you to assure me of it!" He drew himself together. "I have looked at him as a man only looks once into a human face. I looked him through and through and in and out. I could draw him if I knew how to draw, from his head to his chin, and not lose a trait. I have seen how his hair grows in a little peak." Herrick tore off his cap. He pressed his hand back over his brow, over the well-grown hair, growing back from the forehead, with the peak defined. "There," he said, "that is my boy! I have never had what you would call much tenderness in my life, but my mother liked the way my hair grew, and I never forgot the way she used to push it back. She would have pushed that little shaver's hair back in just the same way, and he would have looked like me. And there is some of my old Dad in that little face! Jess' eyes, Jess' lips, but there's the Herrick chin and the Herrick hair! He's all right," the father said between his teeth, and put on his cap again, and turned squarely about and looked across to the child whom Nelly tumbled over in the leaves.

"There will have to be some arrangement whereby I can see my boy." He came back to the quiet woman standing by the pony's head. "I do not mean to set up any claim of three or six months or anything like

that — a child's place is with his mother. But I shall want to see him from time to time."

Nora Langforde could not have spoken. She would not have dared to have trusted her voice. She stood before a great injustice, a great mistake, a horrible disfigured city built up in a moment of despair and jealousy and misunderstanding. But Herrick was thinking just of the little child.

"He is a grand little boy," the father said, "isn't he?" And he smiled humanly, sweetly. "Why, it would take a shell splinter to cut out of my heart what has been suddenly born there today, Mrs. Langforde."

Then Nora Langforde started, shook her head and shook tears away.

"Of course," she said warmly. "I understand down to the ground, and I should feel just as you do in your place."

"I am sorry," he said quietly, "not to have gone up to the Castle, but you'll make it all right with Lady Sylvia."

"It seems too dreadful," she exclaimed, "to have you go back like this."

But Herrick said hurriedly: "Never mind. It's only an interrupted march. I could only have stayed a night. I left my traps down at the station; I thought they could be fetched. I'll go back the way I came."

"Shall you speak to Brian? What will you say to Brian?"

Herrick smiled. "If you could see what is going on where I left, you would wonder if any of us would ever look in the face of a comrade again. I may never see Brian again."

Then he pointed with his hand towards the little boy, who had taken up his gun.

"I would like to speak to *that* little soldier again, however!" He called: "Nelly! Nelly!"

"Nelly knew you?"

"You bet she did, but you can trust a nigger. She wouldn't tell; she would be game to the death. Nelly's all right." He called again: "Nelly!" Then: "Come here, *Boy*."

The little fellow came eagerly forward, running, delighted to be called back by the officer, and Nora saw Herrick bend down from his height to receive the running figure, and then she turned her back on the father and son, and went over to scrutinize the pony's mane and ears.

CHAPTER VII

Brian O'More intended writing Jessica this night before the attack, but all day he had been trying to visualize her and failed; he could not bring her image before him. He had been obsessed by mental pictures of home. Ireland — visions of the house, of his favorite haunts, of sea, beaches, sand, hillock — these pictures hung and floated over the desolate fields of Flanders like a mirage.

Captain O'More saw the afternoon close into the thick night of fog and rain. He was waiting in ambush with his battalion, waiting to attack, and was sitting in his dirty dug-out with his pad on his knee, a bit of candle stuck on a board by his side, and shaded by his helmet. As he started to write, on the paper before him, plainly as though done for him there in water-colors, he could see the eastward window of his room at home, maddening in its beauty and its charm, a mass of yellow rose blooms climbing in, rioting as he had seen it the last time when he had run downstairs to join his mother at dinner.

"Darling Mater:

We are rushing Jerry off the face of France, driving him back, with four years of war gone over us all, and the war's nearly over, thank God! We are driving Jerry back as fast as horse, wheel and foot can carry him. It's topping big game hunting! How they run! Somehow I don't hate them, though. It's all been a most frightful mistake. . . ."

He hated no one. Hate was not his strong suit.

"The land about us is in the most shocking condition, not a scrap of any kind of herb or bush. It is simply a desert of old rusty iron, unthinkable debris, torn, scarred and horrible. But, Mater, I can forget it tonight. I seem to see the pink bloom on the home hills, the golden guinea of the gorse, and gentle little Ireland—I love it all!

"You will like old Bill Hounslow! *Don't* I wish I could pop in and see your meeting! He's all right—the best friend. He hasn't come from a long line of self-indulgent leisured class. If I ever have sons, Mater, I want them to be like Hounslow—men, clean-minded, true hearts. You will love him. I do, and his metal has the right ring. Give him my old rooms. . . . You won't, though—I know you, Mother! Anyway, give him the best you can in war time, and tell him from me, all about Jess. I never could. Somehow today I have not been able to think about anything but home. I seem to see it as on a screen picture, and it could make me an awful duffer. I don't believe that when I get back I'll ever go away again. . . ."

He stopped, did not dare let himself go on like this, closed the letter, put it in its envelope and addressed it to his mother.

He was not going to write to Jess tonight. She made such an imperious demand on his feelings. Over and over again he had to crush her out, not to think of her when he went into action. He had seen more than one officer stick to his dugout, huddle there, not moving, seized suddenly by a horror of death.

Hounslow would want to be here for this big attack which, in his absence, Brian would command. Old Bill would fetch him all the home news. It would be next

best to going home himself. He had had no letters for ten days from any one. They had been going on so fast, and censorship was more rigid now in these last days of the fighting than at any time since the beginning of the war. No sooner would they place their tanks in camouflage than the Germans would locate them, and the game of pitch and toss with life grew keener and more terrible now that the rift showed peace to be near.

Lately, Jessica's motherhood, the fact that she had already been a wife, made him suffer acutely. He could never be first with her. His son would never be her first born. She had belonged to another man.

Whenever these thoughts came to him, he tried to avoid them, but sometimes he did not see how he could bear it. He had had, himself, so frightfully little of Jess, and he had wanted her ever since their happy day at Fortune Bay, years ago.

He would be able now to talk to old Bill about Jessica. His mother would have told the story of his romance, and his engagement and the coming Christmas wedding. Hounslow would be the best man. War would be pretty well over then, and they would surely be able to get leave for this.

His dug-out was within fifty yards of the remnant of forest where the battalion of tanks was hidden safely away. How long their ambush would be successful no one knew, but not much longer certainly. It was their plan to attack before they were located, and the hour, the time, had been left to Brian to decide. He was in full command. He got up, uncurled himself, and so strong had been his memories of home, the pictures so intense and colorful, that it seemed to Brian almost as

though he were going out of the little old bedroom, down the quaint oak steps.

It had been pouring all day. He dragged his helmet down close on his head, pulled up the collar of his thick raincoat.

He was glad that he had lived a clean, straight life, now that he was going to marry Jess. For a modern man, with a hot Irish heart and an imaginative sense, he had lived wonderfully straight.

"What if I don't come out?"

He kneeled down on one knee in the close, prairie-dog hole his dug-out was before he slapped out the candle flame, wrote again with pencil on his pad:

"Dear old Bill: If I should not turn up after this attack, take all of my kit and the letter I have written her to my Mother. And will you give Jess her letters back with your own hands? We are engaged, and expect to be married at Christmas. Mrs. Frederick Herrick, 6 Carlton Terrace. I know I have been a sickening rotter not to have told you about this before. You will be best man, Old Top, won't you? I want you to read Jessica's letters. They will show you what a heart she had, and what a woman she is! You will be great friends.

"Of course you will never see the inside of this letter, Old Bill, but if you ever do, I want you to know that you've been the best thing in these years except Jess.

Brian."

O'More smiled as he addressed the envelope to Hounslow, and put the two letters in his breast-pocket and came, hunching his body, out of the little door, shaking out his long legs. He could see nothing through the drenching rain. He turned to the left, to the darker shadow, where the big beasts of the tanks waited silently.

His orderly, as though he had sprouted out of the smoking, steaming ground, rose in the mist from God knows where. He was over his ankles in mud. He handed O'More a letter.

Brian knew by the feel alone of the thick envelope that it was from Jess, but he could not read it now. He could not even strike a match to see the handwriting, whose very characters always caused him a thrill. He put it unopened in his pocket with the others. It was as though he took with him part of her into the night, into this big adventure. He would read it after the attack. It would be a blessed and beautiful thing to come back with, to look forward to. He would come out all right. These cruel nervous presentiments, were nothing after the long strain of the last fortnight. He had a normal man's belief in life and in chance — he always had had until now.

Overhead came the long singing hissing of a shell fuse, and the projectile landed not twenty yards away on the desecrated soil. The rain sheets received the black smoke and the geyser of earth shooting up, and the foul odor clung in the air of powder, a battle smell familiar, always horrid to his nostrils. There was a screaming overhead, a trail through the darkness, vaguely visible, of the flying death racing across the sky. The Germans had located the tanks, and when he should take them out, it would be under fire.

CHAPTER VIII

From this on, Frederick Herrick had a permanent rendezvous with life. He had never been so vital or vivid, so on fire with the fever of living as on the day when he left Ireland for France, knowing that he had a living son in the world.

He travelled back in a state of exhilaration. During the war men were often uplifted in this manner. A picture of home, a letter, a photograph, some unexpected touch and grip from the old life left behind, from which they had been so ruthlessly torn, was enough to uplift them, exalt them, and in such a state many went to death with smiles on their lips.

His thoughts of Jess had drawn him with magnetic power, but everything centered now in the child. One of his dearest dreams of marriage had been fatherhood and carrying on life through love. He would not give the little beggar now for a kingdom. Nothing could wrench his boy from him now that he had seen him. By means of the chivalrous will that Fred had made, the child would have a fortune, but he had better things than money now to give his son. He could bring him the fruit of a great experience — spiritual battles fought; the results of regeneration and reconstruction. Then there was the war story. He would tell it to his boy. It was worth while to have won the stars on his breast. He had a son to be proud of them.

He had refused to take all his leave. Things were too crucial in the North and he had intended spending only forty-eight hours at O'More and returning directly to his section.

On the way back to the station, as Mrs. Langforde drove him in the small pony cart, he talked out everything as far as he could to her. She would cable Jessica, and if it were possible so to arrange it, the husband and wife need never meet.

Not until he started for France to find his section up in the North did the ugly war fact, the uncompromising reality of what was going on, reach his exalted mind. Then the nauseous cloud smote him as though it wrapped him round in a horrid mantle from which he could not extricate himself. There was no reason why he should escape casualty and death. The front where his section was engaged was the very mouth of Inferno. The force of the war was concentrated in that active North, where the brutal tanks were cleaning up the ridden world and driving out the Germans.

The man who had rushed out of the little house in the South to look for death because he believed his wife hated him and was unfaithful to him, was a very different man from this grave, stern soldier who, with his face set towards the heat of battle, wanted to live with all his might and main. He *must* go on. He could not die now. He was not ready to be wiped off the face of the earth because a filthy mass of human beings had poured their slime over civilization.

His passion for Jessica was drowned in a sweeter, gentler love for the little child, and he thrust out of his mind the man and woman who had found each other in

his absence. The little boy whose arms had been round his neck was now to Fred the very keystone of life. His wife had cost him heartrending anguish, had made him suffer cruelly. Her superiority, her indifference, her aloofness, had awakened the worst of him, until jealousy had burned into his soul like an iron. But love had risen above it all with him, and now as he relinquished Jessica to Brian, he remembered her priceless gift of a son to him, and the little boy linked him to those old days in the South, the sweetest of his life. Fred had been so mad then as to think that Jessica was growing to love him, and day by day he had drawn nearer to her, until the climax of the sacred night when she had not repulsed his love. And as he remembered the wonderful child, he went into Flanders blessing her because of the boy.

Once out of the train at Amiens, he seized what means of transportation he could find, went on up North by motor-truck, by military motor, looking for his section ever farther on. The destroyed lands had never seemed so ghoulish, so ghastly, as after the warm nourished country of Ireland. The devastated territory was like the habitation of lost souls. War and slaughter, streams of wounded, the ugly squads of dirty prisoners, the paraphernalia for killing, the endless lines of gray lorries, filled him with a disgust and loathing such as he had never known. The weather was intolerable, bitterly cold and rain falling in sheets. His last vehicle, a small Ford motor, broke down definitely after nightfall, and he was obliged to leave it by the roadside and strike off on foot into the blank, shell-ridden fields to find his battalion.

He made his way, picking his steps, before the com-

plete darkness of night should find him wandering over what had been German ground forty-eight hours before. He could distinguish little in the dismal grayness, in the abyss of shadows in which he groped. From the few stretcher-bearers who passed him he managed to get the information that part of the Sixth Battalion was a bit farther on to the North, and that was all.

He passed the ugly open mouths of the craters, turned over with his soaking boots the broken, tortured land, soft under his feet with mud and rain-soaked foulness. The open holes were full of horrid wreckage, mysterious objects huddled, whose forms and shapes he would not recognize; he knew too well what they were. He was sickened as never before.

These fields were regions on which a sane and healthy man should turn his back and run miles from, and yet his duty called him to furrow them with his tanks, of which he had been so proud. It was a damned and hellish business, and he was the father of a son, and he wanted to live and see him grow up, and teach him . . . how to kill . . . how to be a straight soldier, if need for soldiers came.

The sharp October air whipped his face. He was wet through. He had expected to find Headquarters and join up with his men. There was no one to inform him that his detachment was five miles farther to the North, and his staff waiting with news of the big attack, the counter-attack, and the blazing victory of the Sixth Battalion Heavy Tanks. He stood still in the soaking fields, and a horrible sense of desolation swept over him. There came upon him as well, the certainty that he was going to play a final game with death. Men would fall

on those last days of hostilities just as they had fallen on the first days of the war, in 1914.

Two orderlies carrying stretchers passed him in the mist.

"Sixth Battalion of Heavy Tanks — where the hell are they?"

"Over there to the left, sir," said the Red Cross men.

Herrick had a superstitious dread of any news they might give him and asked no further questions. In a few moments more he would be face to face with Captain O'More. He tramped on in the direction indicated by the stretcher-bearers. He could not reconcile it in his mind. It is a confounded mess, he thought. Only one of us should carry on. This is a one-man job. The boy will be a half-breed with a lord for a father, and a lot of swell stuff that no commonsense man could stand for. It will be back and fill and irritation of soul and mind all through! We cannot share him, O'More and I! No man can serve two masters, and a boy with two fathers has one too many for his good. It's up to one of us to clear out.

Herrick forged doggedly forward until he came to a mountain of upturned earth, the bowels and intestines of a trench turned inside out. A voice asked:

"Who goes there?"

Herrick halted. "Where's the Sixth Battalion of Heavy Tanks?"

Through the fog and drizzle two Tommies shaped themselves in a rough lean-to, thrown up against the side of the refuse mountain, a camouflage shed made out of sand-bags, and farther on, protected as tenderly as though they were babies, loomed up two great tanks.

Now he could distinguish them in the darkness and drizzle and fog.

The men saluted. "The division's a bit farther on, sir. Five miles, about. We're waiting for the Fourth Battalion to come up with us. We have been mending these blooming beasts all day. We are likely to go on at dawn, sir."

Now Herrick was forced to ask: "You attacked yesterday?"

He came in under the roof of the camouflage shed, bent down to warm his hands over the concealed fire in the ground.

"We bloody well did, sir. Went over the top. Too bad you weren't here, sir. Lost twenty-five out of the fifty tanks, blown clean up by our own mined trenches as we went over, but the other lot took the position, sir. It was the very heart of hell."

"And Captain O'More?"

"There was not one of us who would not have gone in his stead, and you know it, sir. He took us over the top on foot, and they picked him out."

Herrick took the man by the shoulder and shook him like a rat.

"It's a damned lie!"

The man met his eyes. "Killed, sir."

CHAPTER IX

The demobilized men were coming home. Disillusioned, weary of exile, homesick, delirious with joy at their return as they had been full of courage to undertake their great adventure; sick, mutilated, blind and disfigured, and sullen with the hatred of war that all armies know after victory or defeat, they were coming home. Their friends and relatives, their women, crowded the docks and the stations to welcome them.

Jessica had been in America a fortnight before the news came to her that her lover had been killed and that her husband was living. Nora Langforde's cable was handed to her after she had finished speaking for her hospital in Chicago, and she had not fully come out of the daze or recovered from the shock before Fred's first letter to her from the fields in Flanders fell into her hands with its thrilling evidence that he was still in the land of the living.

She broke down at last and went South to the little hunting lodge to pull herself together and to wait for what she believed was going to be the happiness of her life. In the little porch, under the honeysuckle vine, in the early spring — for she had not returned to England, but lingered on — she read and re-read Fred's single letter, epic in its directness and simplicity:

"They have just given me O'More's kit. When I can do so I shall take his personal belongings to his mother, and when I am demobilized I will bring you his messages

and give you back your letters. Please let me know where I can find you when I am discharged from the Army."

He called her by no name, and did not sign his own, but . . . *when he was demobilized he would come!*

It might be any day now, for the troops were landing steadily from overseas.

She waited for him in the little house which they two together had made a perfect little home, and would not have been in any other place than this, the home from which he had rushed away in madness and despair.

In this time of waiting she re-lived her life day by day, dwelling on the weeks she had spent here with him four years before.

Lady Sylvia still had little Fred and Nelly at O'More. The mother had asked for Jess' boy, and Jessica blessed heaven that she could do this for Brian. She had no means of knowing any details about Brian O'More's end, or whether he had read her letter before going into battle, or whether it had come too late.

Seasons would come and go, ripen and fade, repeat themselves, and the earth grow green, and trenches be turned into furrows, and the world swing back to its old measure . . . and Fred and she were both alive in it, thank God! It was not too late to love him and make him happy — for this, most of all, thank God!

She pinned Fred's letter on the cushion in the same place where Herrick had left Atkinson's letter the night he rushed out of the house.

The fields were full of crocuses, and although there was no real winter in that soft climate, the spring came, nevertheless, and Jessica heard it in the song of the

whippoorwill and in the rustling of the rushes along the river, and in the waving of the blue flags.

She made her garden grow, and dug and planted. She rested hours under the trees in blossom, or lay out on the pine-strewn earth, for she was overworked and over-tired, and the rest was divine.

She had no further letters from Fred Herrick, but she wrote: "Come to me here. I am waiting."

And she tried as best she knew to prepare her heart to receive the gift that was to be given to it once again, and she waited humbly and with thankfulness.

At first she was feverish with impatience; then she quieted, and drifted, and ceased to count days and hours, and watched the unveiling of beauties on the earth and in the trees as the spring fulfilled its promise.

She walked many miles, and rode too, and grew daily more vigorous and alive and like the Jessica of Fortune Bay — bright-cheeked, star-eyed, with muscles fine as silk. She was so full of energy that she longed to take an axe, and, like the woodcutters of her family, fell the trees themselves as an outlet by her labor for the forces that stirred in her veins and limbs like the sap in those beautiful trees.

Letters were long in coming from Ireland, and she heard little of her boy. She felt like the recluse who had gone into voluntary retirement, to grow ready for life.

She asked herself over and over again: "When will he come? Will he write or wire, or simply come? How will it be?"

She did not watch the transports. She could not. She never feared or doubted. She knew he would return.

One night after supper she went up to her room early, delightfully tired after a long, late ride. She had taken down her hair and braided it for the night and slipped into her dressing-gown, when she heard Reddy, the old setter, a favorite dog of Fred's, whine and cry and bark shortly, sharply.

Her breathing nearly stopped. She grew cold as death and remained for a few moments transfixed, incapable of moving or crying out.

Then she heard a voice speaking to Reddy, a voice she knew well, stronger, more assured, deeper, a voice used to command. A step came up the porch and the door opened.

Jessica ran out on the landing in slippers and dressing-gown.

"Fred!"

Reddy flew up to her, climbing up on his belly, then rushed down again, whining and crying like a human thing.

Fred Herrick stood down at the stair's foot like a strange man in a strange house, under the little hall lamp.

"I'll wait here."

She saw him, in a British uniform, tall, thinner, different, and yet familiar — the big, stern, sunburnt soldier, whole and safe and alive. Once he had been all hers.

Jessica flew down the stairs and he caught her. She almost fell upon him and over Reddy. Jessica, the cold, undemonstrative, indifferent, discouraging Jessica! Jessica, who turned away from his caresses until his heart had broken!

"Fred!"

He drew her — indeed, he almost carried her into the living room, and they sat on the little sofa by the window, and he opened it wide. The space was full of the honey-suckle vines like a screen. The sweetness rushed in upon them.

He took out of his pocket her letters to Brian O'More, stained, dirty, disfigured.

"O'More wrote me on the day of the attack to bring you these. He asked me to come and to see you for him."

These were the first words he had spoken, and they were composed and quiet, and Jessica quieted under his constraint. But the inanimate letters were more appealing and potent in their pathos than any words. She touched them gently, reverently, looking in her husband's face, and saw how stern it was and how set, and knew that she must win him back as she had let him go.

"Oh, Fred! Fred! To think I might have lost you forever! To think you are not dead, that you have come back like this, here, to our little home . . . Fred . . . where you loved me so, and where I loved you. . . ."

Her words were so low that he could hardly hear them. She looked into what Nora Langforde had called his "demanding eyes." Fred Herrick was not "under her feet." He would never be again.

"I did love you, Fred. I always did, but I was a proud fool and I would not acknowledge it. I loved you in Boston. I would never have married you otherwise. I loved you at Black Fish when you kissed me in the woods and Joe thrashed you. Something woke in me that day, Fred, and it was all for you, but I would not acknowledge it. I guess I did not know or understand, and that spring . . . that spring. . . ."

She could not go on, and found the letter she had written last to Brian and gave it to her husband.

"Read this . . . read this." And then she stopped, looking at it lying in her hand, crumpled, stained. It was unopened.

"Why," she said slowly, "he never opened it; he never read it! See, it is sealed. He never knew that I did not love him. Brian went to his death thinking that I cared for him. It cannot do you any harm now, Fred."

She tore the letter open, took it out of its envelope, and forced it before Fred's eyes.

"Read it, my darling," she said tenderly. She put her arms around his neck and her cheek close to his cheek, and she held him thus closely, using the names that he used to dream that she called him in kind sleep.

And when Fred had read the few words written for Brian O'More and never intended for him, when he had read them all, he let the letter fall and caught Jessica, straining her to him. He had the big gift of real understanding. In that moment he knew and believed.

Brian's letters, stained with his blood, fell to the floor at her feet, and the red setter lay across the threshold between the hall and the little sitting-room, with his head on his paws, and the soul looking out of his eyes at his master.

The thick honeysuckle vine, with its white blossoms, stirred in the night wind blowing over the pine trees. The perfume of the night came in to blend with their caresses, and the cry of the whippoorwill calling to its love came plaintive and sweet and appealing, the cry of creature to creature, never satisfied, always yearning for its mate.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and dates, which appears to be a record of some kind. The names are written in a cursive script, and the dates are in a more formal, printed style. The list is organized into two columns, with names on the left and dates on the right. The names are: John Smith, James Brown, and William Jones. The dates are: 1812, 1813, and 1814. The list is followed by a signature, which is also in cursive script. The signature is: John Smith.

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